THE HINDU PHILOSOPHY OF CONDUCT

BEING LECTURES ON THE

BHAGAVAD GITA

BY

Professor M. RANGACHARYA, M. A.

Vol. III

EDITED BY

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

In my prefatory note to Volume II of this work, I explained the circumstances under which the duty of publishing these lectures devolved on me, and the principles on which, under the guidance of Mr. M. B. Varadaraja Iyengar, I carried on the work of editing the manuscripts. And it is hardly necessary to repeat that account here.

When the printing of this volume was in progress, I expected that there would be no need to write a preface of any length and that nothing more would be required of me than a thankful acknowledgment of help received from various quarters But I find it now necessary to perform an unforeseen and grievous duty in recording the death some two years ago of Mr. M. B. Varadaraja Iyengar, but for whose friendly encouragement and assurance of helpful guidance I might not have undertaken this work at all. His end came with shocking suddenness. With the express purpose of meeting him, I travelled over to Bangalore during the first week of July, 1937, only to find that he had passed away the previous night.

Mr. Varadaraja Iyengar was a lawyer by profession, but a scholar by instinct. For many years he had pursued Sanskrit studies solely out of his abounding love for the subject. There was hardly any department of Sanskrit literature that he had not mastered, and so faithful was his memory that he could recall at a moment's notice any matter lying within the wide domain of classical scholarship which he had made his own. He combined within himself the minute accuracy of the traditional pandit with the critical vision and broad outlook generally associated with modern scholarship. Yet he was so unassuming and modest that few outside the circle of his intimate acquaintances ever suspected the vast extent of his erudition. Conversation with him was seldom frivolous or futile. I have rarely spoken to him even for a few minutes without learning something new. And it was all "learning without tears". For he had the great gift of lucid exposition and a fine sense of humour which could enliven even discussions on abstruse metaphysics. The happy hours I spent with him in Bangalore reading and revising the manuscripts of these lectures will always remain a cherished memory with me, and it is

one of my lasting regrets that it was not given me to meet him more often and get more help from him in my own studies. Happily, however, so far as this work is concerned, I had the benefit of his guidance in editing the manuscripts to the end. He even read the proofs to about the end of the 15th Chapter.

His professional preoccupations did not leave him sufficient leisure to devote himself as much as he might have wished to literary pursuits, and it is a matter for regret that he did not leave behind him more than one or two works to testify to his keen interest in Sanskrit culture. He collaborated with my father many years ago in a well-known translation of the *Śrī-Bhāshya*. This work, I may note in passing, has not been published in full, only one out of the three proposed volumes having been printed.* And Mr. M. B. Varadaraja Iyengar devoted some time during the last months of his life to revising the still unpublished parts of the translation. He also translated Śrī Rāmānuja's *Vedārtha-Saṅgraha* into English, the translation appearing serially in the *Brahmavādin*.

My sense of thankfulness in having brought this work, however unworthily or imperfectly, to a conclusion would have been more or less complete had he lived to share in my joy. But that was not to be. I may, however, add that his son, Mr. M. B. Narasimha Iyengar, himself an accomplished scholar, has throughout helped me with numerous suggestions and after the death of his father read through the proofs. His connection with the work has to some extent dulled the keen edge of my disappointment. And to him here I gratefully offer my thanks. I must also thank Mr. K. R. Sarma of the Modern Publishing House for assisting me in the preparation of the glossary and the errata. Lastly, my thanks are also due to Messrs. G. A. Natesan & Co. for the help and co-operation I received from them when this work was in print.

July, 1939,
Triplicane.

M. R. SAMPATKUMARAN.

* The other volumes have since been published.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE

PHILOSOPHY OF CONDUCT ACCORDING TO THE RELIGION OF THE HINDUS

BEING

AN EXPOSITION

OF THE

BHAGAVADGITA

VOLUME III

योो नित्यो यमुपासतेऽखिलजना येनेदमावास्यते
यस्मै कर्म करोति सात्त्विककुलं यस्माज्जगज्जायते ।
यस्यैश्वर्यमवेद्यनैजविभवं यस्मिन् हि विश्वं स्थितं
तं दूरे पुनरन्तिकेऽपि विदितं ध्यायामि नारायणम् ॥

CHAPTER XIII

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GENTLEMEN,

Last time we completed the study of the twelfth chapter of the *Gītā*; and therewith ends the second of the three great divisions into which the *Gītā* naturally falls. You know the first six chapters deal mainly with the question of self-realisation and also with the disciplines of *karma* and *jñāna*, while Chapters 7 to 12 are predominantly concerned with the question of God-realisation and the correlated discipline of *bhakti*. It may be recalled that I drew your attention to the view that the vision of *viśvarūpa* might be considered in a way as completing the teachings of the *Gītā*. It is of course evident that Śrī Kṛishṇa attained the primary object of His discourse and brought about a welcome change in Arjuna's attitude by demonstrating the universal vision. Nevertheless, He must have felt that His teachings were not yet

complete in every detail; brief references had yet to be expanded and loose ends brought together. And stray facts here and there had to be shown their proper place in the scheme of things. In short, the teachings of the *Gītā* must be built into a rational and consistent system. I need hardly say that the development of thought in the *Gītā* has so far proceeded after the manner of dialogues. It began with the doubts and difficulties of Arjuna; and point by point and step by step, the progress of thought has been determined by the needs of Arjuna's changing mind. Accordingly, it is easy to understand how there may still remain points requiring expansion or elucidation. And so it is generally held that the third division of the *Gītā*, comprising the last six chapters, is, as it were, supplementary to the other two. This does not necessarily lead to the inference, as some critics suppose, that Chapters 13 to 18 are interpolated and only loosely connected with the work. For, they shed indispensable light on many obscure points and make the *Gītā* as a whole logically and philosophically complete. The *guṇas*, for instance, are referred to often in the course of the first twelve chapters, but it is only in the fourteenth chapter that they are dealt with systematically. So, too, the question of caste meets with a full and satisfactory treatment only in the last *shaṭka*. Such examples may be multiplied. But I hope I have said enough to convince you that the third division of the *Gītā* has an essential and necessary part to fulfil.

You may remember that I tried to give you a connected account of the progress of thought in the *Gītā* in the first twelve chapters last time. The lesson of equality, we saw then, is the main purport of the teachings of the *Gītā*. It is only by applying this lesson in our daily life that we can hope to get rid of the bondage of *karma* and emancipate our souls. Now, this rule of conduct is seen to rest partly on self-realisation and partly on God-realisation. That is, it is based on the soul and God in us, as contradistinguished from the *prakṛiti* or the material constitution of our bodies. It is easy to see that we must learn to discriminate between the promptings of the flesh and the dictates of the spirit, if we are to follow this rule of equality with any noticeable success.

We have already had brief indications of how this might be done. In the seventh chapter, two *prakṛitis* of God were described, one as the lower and the other as the higher. The lower, it was taught, is the world of matter and energy, while the higher is of the nature of consciousness. Both these *prakṛitis* of God are closely intermingled in the universe, and each contributes its share to the complex of motives that actuates our conduct from day to day. And what we have to learn is to subordinate matter to spirit. That is, we must see that the soul is never made the slave of the body. The tendency to selfishness, the attachment to pleasure and the aversion from pain, which characterise our life ordinarily, have their foundations in the nature of our body. And this lower life of the body must be subordinated to the higher life of the soul. Not otherwise can we benefit from the nectar of virtuous conduct, which Śrī Kṛishṇa has been teaching so far. Clearly, it is necessary to divide the domains of body and soul, and distinguish the promptings of the one from the dictates of the other. The world of spirit must be differentiated from the world of matter, if we are to live the life of the spirit. This is the beginning of all philosophy and the foundation of all ethics. And it is this task which is undertaken in the thirteenth chapter, whose study we may now begin.

Following the principal commentators, I do not propose to accept as genuine a *śloka*, which is sometimes given as the first of this chapter. It purports to be a question from Arjuna, asking for light on the distinctive characteristics of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña*. Even without such a question from Arjuna, it is easy to understand how Śrī Kṛishṇa might have felt the need for a more systematic treatment of the several questions already discussed in outline. When two persons are conversing, many things, besides actual speech, may turn the tide of discussion. The face is the index of the soul, and is sometimes more expressive than speech. Accordingly, I do not think that the context necessarily requires such a question from Arjuna. And if we are right in thinking that the last six chapters of the *Gītā* are supplementary and intended to round up the teachings so far given into a complete system, it may become even essential to hold that it is Śrī Kṛishṇa who starts the discussion again, with the object of giving the final touches to the work already so well done.

Now, we may proceed to the study of the first stanza of the thirteenth chapter, which runs thus :

श्री भगवानुवाच—

इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते ।
एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः ॥ १ ॥

ŚRĪ KṚISHṆA SAID :

(1) This body, O Arjuna, is called '*kshetra,*' and those who know this (soul) call him, who knows it, '*kshetrajña*'.

I have left untranslated the words, '*kshetra*' and '*kshetrajña*', in this stanza, as it is not easy to find their exact equivalents in English. '*Kshetra*' ordinarily means a certain area of land. Then it also came to mean an arable field, where one may sow and reap. Here, the body is compared to a cultivated field. It is a *kshetra,* wherein you may reap abundantly the harvest of the soul or something not quite so good. And just as there is a right method of tending the field, there is also a right method of tending the body. If you take proper care of it, you may reap from it the harvest of the fruition of the purposes of the soul. Even as neglect may cause your field to be overgrown with rank and poisonous weeds, even so improper cultivation of the body may lead to the destruction of your soul. That is, in the circumstances, your soul will become weak and unable to shake off the bondage of *karma*. Thus the body is compared to a cultivated field, wherein one may reap the harvests of the good or bad effects of one's *karma*.

He who knows the *kshetra* is a *kshetrajña*. This term stands for the soul, which is sometimes designated as *jīva*, sometimes as *ātman* and sometimes as *purusha*. Whatever the name we adopt, it is clear that the function of the soul is to know the *kshetra*, the field of its play. The question is sometimes asked in European philosophy : How do we know that we are ? It may be answered in various ways; but the view is here put forward that our knowledge of ourselves as individual beings, distinct in ourselves

and different from others around us, is entirely dependent on our *kshetra* being characterised by the in-dwelling *kshetrajña*. For it is easy to think of a body without a soul. A corpse cannot feel, as we feel in relation to our bodies, because there is no *kshetrajña* in it.

It is of interest to note that, according to the stanza we are studying, the soul is called *kshetrajña* by those who know the soul. This implies that it is those who have attained self-realisation, that say that the soul is the knower of the body. They alone realise the true difference between body and soul; they do not confound the body with the soul, the conscious knower with the unconscious object of knowledge. And because the soul is *kshetrajña*, it is, as it were, master in the situation. The body is there not to enslave the soul, but to serve it; just as you do not exist for the sake of your fields, but they are intended to serve your purposes. Of course, there must be some kind of mutual agreement. If you refuse to serve your fields, they will not serve you; but ultimately the fields exist for the sake of the owner, and not the owner for the sake of the fields. Likewise, the soul must not be made the slave of the body; but the body must be made the efficient servant of the soul. So much appears to me to be implied in the soul being designated as *kshetrajña*. The term has also been understood to mean God; but that view may be conveniently considered when we study the next stanza in which S'ri Kṛishṇa declares:

क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत ।
क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानं यत्तद् ज्ञानं मतं मम ॥ २ ॥

(2) And know Me also, O Arjuna, to be the *kshetrajña* in all the *kshetras*. That which is the knowledge of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña* is deemed (by Me) to be (really) the knowledge of Myself.

The soul abiding in the body, we were taught, is the knower of the body as well as of itself. But in every being, in addition to the soul, God is also present as *antaryāmin*. And as the soul's power to know is derived from God, He is the Knower *par*

excellence. So He also can be called *kshetrajña*. Thus every *kshetra* may be thought of as being associated with two *kshetrajñas*, one supreme and the other subordinate. Let us go back for a moment to the analogy of the cultivated field. Suppose there is a tenant who has leased the land from the proprietor. As cultivator of the land, the tenant exercises some authority over it; he is *kshetrajña* to some extent. The final and ultimate rights over the land, however, vest with the proprietor, who is also, therefore, *kshetrajña*.

When we know the nature of our bodies and of our souls, their powers and limitations, we are in a position to realise that, apart from and above body and soul, there is a higher entity, which is responsible for both the body and the soul being what they are. That is, the knowledge of the body and the soul leads to the knowledge of the entity beyond them. The differentiation of the body from the soul paves the way for the differentiation of both from God. It is thus that the knowledge of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña* is equivalent to a knowledge of God.

All this, of course, presupposes that the individual soul is distinct from the Supreme Soul. But, as you are well aware, the monistic school of the *Vedānta* denies the ultimate validity of the distinction. Śaṅkarāchārya, therefore, urges in his lengthy commentary on this stanza that there is only one *kshetrajña* in all the *kshetras*, namely, God. From this it follows that a knowledge of the nature of the *kshetra* as unreal and born of *māyā*, and of the nature of the *kshetrajña* as the one and only reality, is the same as the knowledge of God. The *advaitist* interpretation of this verse has been controverted by Rāmānujāchārya in what is practically a brief *resume* of the *Śrībhāshya* appearing as a commentary on this verse.

There is thus a great deal of interesting philosophical controversy over this verse. But, as I have been trying to explain to you, from the point of view of our study of the *Gītā*, these metaphysical differences are not of very serious importance. The *Gītā* can, of course, be studied as a text-book of metaphysics; then certainly such questions as whether or not the individual self is identical with the Supreme Self will assume due importance.

But, from the purely ethical standpoint, there is practically no difference of opinion among the rival philosophical schools. Whatever attitude one may adopt towards ultimate metaphysical problems—and their investigation is certainly essential in a quest after truth—the rule of life is the rule of unselfish equality. All who follow the ideal of *samatva* can attain *moksha*. And it is not the philosophers alone who are fit for salvation. In fact, I have at times ventured to maintain that it is not metaphysical reasoning so much as conduct that saves us.

It seems to me that, if we follow the rule of equality sincerely and earnestly, our philosophical conclusions, whatever they may be, will not bar our progress to *moksha*. With the limited powers of knowledge that man has, I do not believe that any one, however great his philosophic genius, can arrive at a complete knowledge of the truth. One may light for us a little a dark corner here, another may unravel a little a tangled maze there. Philosophy can do no more than vouchsafe to us stray glimpses of truth. And what little knowledge we can arrive at must always be welcomed. We must, therefore, greet with respect all the conclusions which different thinkers have arrived at in their search after the ultimate truth of things. These conclusions, however contradictory they may seem, are not really so, when examined in relation to the ultimate reality. For, as Śrī Kṛishṇa has taught us, that reality has many aspects and may be looked at in many ways and from many standpoints. Let us, therefore, refrain from bearing ill-will against those who may differ from us. As far as possible, let us avoid dissension. And if disagree we must in regard to any philosophical or metaphysical question, let us do so, remembering that those who differ from us have the same right to their views as we have to ours. All earnest endeavours to comprehend the reality of things deserve our esteem. And they all lead to the rule of unselfish equality as the rule of life.

This does not necessarily imply that we must give up our individual views for the sake of a vague eclecticism. Let us by all means be warm in our convictions; but let not the warmth of our convictions induce us to be intolerant towards the views of others. The light which guides me, I must utilise; but this does not empower me to say that the light which guides any one else is a

mere will-o'-the-wisp. Bearing in mind the manifold aspects of the ultimate reality and the limited powers of the human mind, it is difficult to justify intolerance of any kind. Any philosopher of any age and any nationality would be willing to subscribe to this view. It is only the philosopher who has struggled day and night in investigating the ultimate problems that knows the imperfection and inadequacy of all human thought and the very definite limits which it may not cross.

I have digressed so far because this thirteenth chapter has given rise to acute differences of opinion among the authoritative commentators. I hope I have said enough to convince you that the rule of unselfish equality is seen by all to be obligatory, irrespective of their metaphysical opinions, and that, whatever interpretation we may choose to follow, our ethical standpoint is universally acceptable. We may now pass on to the study of the third stanza, in which Śri Kṛishṇa informs Arjuna of what He proposes to teach in the course of the succeeding twenty verses.

तत् क्षेत्रं यच्च यादृक्च यद्विकारि यतश्च यत् ।
स च यो यत्प्रभावश्च तत् समासेन मे शृणु ॥ ३ ॥

(3) What that *kshetra* is, what it is like, what its modifications are, whence it has come and what its nature is; who he (the *kshetrajña*) is and what his powers are; (all) this hear briefly from Me.

Here again the term, '*kshetrajña*', is understood differently by different schools of the *Vedānta*. Śaṅkarāchārya, who thinks that it stands for the Absolute, explains that the 'powers' of the *kshetrajña* arise from the *upādhis*, the limiting conditions of the phenomenal universe.

ऋषिभिर्बहुधा गीतं छन्दोभिर्विविधैः पृथक् ।
ब्रह्मसूत्रपदैश्चैव हेतुमद्भिर्विनिश्चितैः ॥ ४ ॥

(4) (The true nature of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña*) has been sung by *ṛishis,* in many ways in different metres distinctly, and (taught) in the well-settled, reasoned words of the *Brahma-sūtras*.

Śrī Kṛishṇa begins His exposition of the nature of body and soul, matter and spirit, with a reference to the works of ancient *ṛishis*. It is worthy of note that even Śrī Kṛishṇa finds it necessary to base His teachings on authority. Of course this is not the first time that He has sought support for His teachings in the ancient scriptures of this country. But we may take this opportunity to examine the general question of the value of authority in religious teaching. And, first, please notice that Śrī Kṛishṇa does not teach from the standpoint known as *prabhu-sammita*. Though He has declared that He is God incarnate, He does not require Arjuna to base the truth of His teachings on that fact alone. He does not say: "Look here, I am God. All that I tell you must be the truth, and your duty is merely to obey My commands." On the other hand, the great Teacher has condescended to place Himself on a level of friendly equality with His humble disciple. He argues out His theses logically and patiently and takes pains to answer doubts and difficulties. He tells Arjuna something to this effect: "This is what we can understand about the ultimate truth of things. Reason and think out for yourself and see whether you can follow Me. I have endeavoured to show you that My teaching rests on truth and has the support of the great thinkers of the past. In fact, I have twofold authority on My side—the authority of tradition on the one hand and the authority of truth on the other."

Of course, the authority of truth is more important than the authority of tradition. But it is well to note that Śrī Kṛishṇa does not disdain the latter. And this point must always be borne in mind. For, it is only human to place the utmost reliance on one's own convictions and disregard all external authority which is not in complete consonance with one's apprehension of the truth of things. We cannot say that it is wrong to have convictions and to act on them; but neither can we say that it is right to disregard opinions other than our own. The disregard of all external authority leads to intellectual self-assertion, which is as effective an enemy of liberation as moral self-assertion is. And it is also well to remember that the vividness, strength and clearness of our convictions do not guarantee their truth.

The authority of the sages and the seers of the past is based on the value which succeeding generations found in their recorded

wisdom. And we can ill afford to neglect it in the difficult quest after the ultimate truth of things. It is possible that in the course of our thinking we may meet with riddles that they have already solved or fall into errors against which they may warn us. Let us follow the light that leads us; but at the same time let us hold in esteem the light that guides others, and in particular, let us pay attention to those great seers who have been shining beacon-lights from time immemorial. While, therefore, we have to shape our life in accordance with our convictions, we have also a duty to conform ourselves to external authority. All of us have to steer ourselves between these two forces, which seem mutually contradictory. But this contradiction is only apparent. And Śrī Kṛishṇa shows by precept and example that the greatness of one's wisdom need not lead to any conflict with or disregard of the authority of the great teachers of the past.

And so, He points out in this *śloka* that His views on the distinctive characteristics of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña* are in consonance with those expressed by the ancient *ṛishis* in many ways and many places. He is, as it were, bringing together what they have already said in different contexts. He proposes to give Arjuna merely the essence of their teaching.

The word, '*chhandas*', which occurs in the stanza, may mean either the *Vedic* metre or the text of the *Vedic* hymns. It is usual to note four points about every *Vedic sūkta*, which is generally a hymn of praise addressed to some *Vedic* deity. First of all, there is the *ṛishi*, who is the seer of the *sūkta*. He is believed to be literally the 'seer' of the *sūkta*, which is held to be in existence from eternity to eternity. The so-called author of it only saw it. In other words, the *sūkta* was revealed to the *ṛishi*. And then there is the *devatā*, the deity in whose honour the hymn is composed. The next point to be noted is the *chhandas* or the metre of the hymn. Lastly, there is the *viniyoga*, or the use to which the hymn is put in the sacrificial religion of the *Vedas*. I have translated the term, '*chhandas*', as metre in this context, because there is the word, '*gītam*', meaning 'sung' near by, and mention is made of *ṛishis* as well.

The reference to the *Brahma-sūtras* here has given rise to some difference of opinion among the ancient commentators as well as

modern scholars. Translated, the term would mean nothing more than aphorisms relating to the *Brahman*. But it is now applied only to the *sūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa, on which the three great *āchāryas* of latter-day Hinduism, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva, have commented at length. It is conceivable that there were other *sūtras* besides those of Bādarāyaṇa, dealing with the same or similar topics. And the question is made somewhat complicated for modern scholarship by the fact that almost all the authoritative commentators on the *Vedānta-sūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa find there some references to the *Gītā*. As we are not engaged at present in a historical discussion on the date of the *Gītā* or of the *Vedānta-sūtras*, we need not come to any definite decision on this point. It seems to me that Śrī Kṛishṇa was merely pointing out the contrast between the songs sung in various metres by ancient *ṛishis* and the reasoned texts of the *Brahma-sūtras*. Clearly, it was His intention to state that the true nature of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña* had been dealt with both systematically and unsystematically in the past—systematically in the *Brahma-sūtras*, whether of Bādarāyaṇa or of others, and unsystematically in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. And He proceeds to set forth the conclusions that He draws from a study of the teachings of the *ṛishis* in the succeeding stanzas.

महाभूतान्यहङ्कारो बुद्धिरव्यक्तमेव च ।
इन्द्रियाणि दशैकं च पञ्च चेन्द्रियगोचराः ॥ ५ ॥

इच्छा द्वेषस्सुखं दुःखं संघातश्चेतनाधृतिः ।
एतत्क्षेत्रं समासेन सविकारमुदाहृतम् ॥ ६ ॥

(5-6) The great elements, the *ahaṅkāra,* the *buddhi,* the *avyakta,* the ten senses and the one, the five objects of senses, desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, the *saṅghāta* which is the vehicle of consciousness—thus, in brief, has the *kshetra* been described with (the) modifications (it is capable of causing as well as undergoing).

Reference is here made to the *tattvas* or the ultimate categories of the Sāṅkhya philosophy. By the great elements are to be understood earth, water, fire, air and ether, which

represented in ancient thought the ultimate irreducible constituents of the physical universe of matter and energy. It has also been suggested that the elements mentioned here are not the gross, sensible ones, but the finer *tanmātras* which are the differentiated sources of their evolution. This view has been put forward, as the five objects of senses mentioned in the next line may be considered to mean much the same thing. But those who take the view that the gross elements are referred to by the expression, '*mahābhūtāni*', understand the objects of senses to be the sensible qualities of the universe around us. *Ahaṅkāra*, as I have sought to explain on a former occasion (Vol. II, pp. 19), is the principle of egoity, which is the differentiated source of the finer bases of the individualised elements. The term, '*buddhi*', does not mean here the faculty of intellection, but the Sāṅkhya principle, *mahat*, from which *ahaṅkāra* is supposed to be evolved. As I told you when we were studying VII. 4, the idea of condensation or atomic aggregation appears to me to be implied in the evolution of the principle, *mahat*, from the undifferentiated *mūla-prakṛiti*, but the process of condensation and structural aggregation has not gone far enough to deprive it of its uniformity and homogeneity. *Avyakta* is the *mūla-prakṛiti*, the primordial basis and substratum of the universe of matter and energy. The eleven senses are the five organs of perception, the five organs of action and *manas* or the faculty of attention. And as we have seen, the five objects of senses may be taken to be either the gross elements or the perceivable qualities of objects.

Desire and aversion, pleasure and pain, these are here mentioned under the *kshetra*, and this requires some explanation. We will consider the question presently. The word, '*saṅghāta*', literally means putting together, combining. We may take it to mean a compound. Here the reference is generally taken to be to the body, which is a compound of the various elements and the *indriyas*. Then there is the expression, '*chetanādhṛiti*', which has been understood in two different ways. If we split up *chetanā* and *dhṛiti* into two separate words, then they mean consciousness and mental resolution respectively. But, if we look upon *chetanādhṛiti* as a single compound word, qualifying *saṅghāta*, then it will have the sense of 'being the vehicle of consciousness'. Presently, we will try to make out what this exactly means. All

these, Śrī Kṛishṇa sums up, describe the *kshetra* and its *vikāras*. The term, '*vikāra*', is used here to indicate some of the apparently psychological phenomena, such as desire and aversion, that are here declared to be physical in character. The underlying idea, as we will see soon, is that these psychological phenomena arise on account of the association of the body with the soul.

Let us now try to understand the significance of the expression, '*chetanādhṛiti*'. We generally speak of matter as being the vehicle of energy. By saying so, we mean that matter is something in or through which energy makes itself manifest. Now in the world around us we observe another ultimate principle, different from matter and energy—the principle, namely, of consciousness. And this has matter serving for its vehicle. It is pertinent to ask whether consciousness has ever been observed dissociated from a material embodiment of some kind or other. So far as normal human experience is concerned, the answer must be a decided negative. The *yogin*, perhaps, can say that in the state of *samādhi*, it is possible for him to realise for himself the principle of consciousness, apart from all bodily associations. But even those who are not adepts in the practice of *yoga* can easily make out that consciousness is different from matter. And it always makes itself manifest in matter. So matter is its vehicle. The term, '*saṅghāta*', therefore, may well stand for a putting together of various material elements, which serve as the support or the vehicle of consciousness, or of the conscious self.

Another point of great interest in these stanzas, as I pointed out to you, is that certain things which modern psychology would regard as mental phenomena are here attributed to the *kshetra* or the body. Śrī Kṛishṇa's meaning will become clear, if we try to see how these mental phenomena arise. In every embodied being, as I need not tell you, there is a coming together of body and soul, matter and spirit. Now, all of us, as embodied beings, feel certain desires and aversions. Let me take an instance. We feel hungry and desire food. Is this desire due to the body or the soul? To answer this, let us ask ourselves another question: when we eat to satisfy our hunger, is it the body or the soul that gets fed? Clearly, it is the body. If the soul had no material embodiment, then there would be no need for feeling hungry. Owing to certain

physiological processes, there is a waste of bodily matter; we eat food in order to make up this waste and supply the energy necessary for the needs of our physical life. In a similar way, try to see how many of our desires and needs can be traced ultimately to the body. Just for a moment think of mankind free from the daily necessity of eating, free from hunger and thirst. How different would be our life then, how much of the bitterness and the hatred that darken our lives would then vanish away!

Śrī Kṛishṇa, as you may remember, asked us to overcome *saṅkalpa-prabhava-kāma*, the desire born of our fancies. Man has little to desire for, so far as his spiritual life is concerned. Most of his desires take their rise from the needs of the body or the pampered fancies of a life dedicated to the pleasures of the body. But, if the life of the body is accurately understood, and the flesh is duly subordinated to the spirit, then we find that our needs are not many. It is only when we stifle the call of the soul and lead a life centred in the body, that our *saṅkalpa-prabhava-kāma* gains the upper hand and brings on eternal discontent. Yayāti, as you may remember, says: "Desire is never satisfied by the enjoyment of the objects of desire, but is made to increase all the more, as fire is by sacrificial offerings."

In a similar way, pleasure and pain can be shown to be more rooted in the body than in the soul. The *yogin* in the state of *samādhi* feels neither pleasure nor pain. Let his body be cut or pierced, he feels no pain. Place in his mouth a piece of sugar-candy, he feels not the pleasure of tasting sweetness. And let us bear in mind that the state of *samādhi* is known to more than one religion besides Hinduism. And so we need not hesitate to draw the inference that the state of *yogic* realisation, in which the soul withdraws itself, so to say, from the body, warrants us to do—the inference, namely, that pleasure and pain appertain more largely to the body than to the soul. A *yogin* in such a state can of course be compared with a corpse; for both do not feel pleasure and pain. But there is this differenoe. The corpse is altogether unconscious, while the *yogin* is quite conscious of himself. The perception of his soul has itself for its object. As they say in Sanskrit, the *gochara* of the *ātman* is the *ātman* itself in such a state. And when the soul withdraws itself from its close and

intimate relations with the body, it shakes itself free from all corporeal influences and realises its own essential nature. In this experience of self-realisation neither pleasure nor pain, neither desire nor aversion has any part.

To sum up. Let us take the whole of the body with the enlivening *chetanā* within. The *jaḍa-prakṛiti* thereof is made up of the various *tattvas* mentioned before. The desire and the aversion, the pleasure and the pain which we feel as embodied beings, are the *vikāras* of the *saṅghāta* that arise out of the union of matter and spirit. We must not understand Śrī Kṛishṇa to say that these *vikāras* are entirely material in their nature, but that they have their roots more in the body than in the soul. They are not altogether unrelated to the soul, for later in this chapter (XIII. 20), we will be taught that the capacity to experience belongs entirely to the soul. What we have to note is that these are not wanted for the life of the soul, while they are unavoidably associated with the life of the body. As long as we continue to be embodied beings, we experience these *vikāras*. The greatest saint finds sugar sweet and quinine bitter, even as the worst sinner. *Sukha* and *duḥkha* are to be found in the life of the saint as well as the sinner; but in the latter they give rise to *rāga* and *dvesha* more readily than in the former. It is one thing to feel pain and pleasure, and it is quite a different thing to guide our life by the natural tendencies they give rise to. The desire to have more and more of pleasure and less and less of pain makes our lives selfish and binds our souls securely in the prison-house of *samsāra*. If we understand the distinctive characteristics of the body and the soul, we can differentiate the call of the spirit from the demands of the flesh, and lead a life, as far as possible free from *rāga* and *dvesha*. Thus, we can subjugate the ape and the tiger in us, and allow the higher life of the soul to assert itself.

It is of interest to note that Śaṅkarāchārya draws attention in his commentary to an important difference between the teachings of the Vaiśeshika thinkers and the views put forward by Śrī Kṛishṇa here. According to the former, desire, aversion, pain and pleasure are all qualities of the soul. The great commentator observes that these are here considered to belong to the province of the *kshetra*, because they are all objects of

cognition. If the Absolute is the true subject in all subject-object relationships, the whole world of our experience, including our sense of distinctive personality, takes on the nature of the object. We may base our sense of individuality on the evidence of our consciousness, but according to the *advaita* philosophy, this consciousness is no more than a glow, springing from the union of the body and the senses. Consciousness, in reality, belongs only to the Absolute; in fact, it *is* the Absolute. It is true, however, that normal human experience looks upon consciousness as giving rise to the idea of individuality; but it becomes the object of the idea of the ego only in so far as it is limited and conditioned by its adjuncts, the *manas*, the *indriyas*, etc. And so, Śaṅkarāchārya interprets the term, '*chetanā*', to mean a function of the mind, which becomes manifest in the *saṅghāta* of the body and the senses. It takes on the semblance of the self, even as a ball of red-hot iron takes on the semblance of fire. *Chetanā*, thus understood, is necessarily of the nature of the object, and is thus easily seen to take its place in the domain of the *kshetra*, which is only another name for the not-self.

The main point that we have to note, whatever interpretation we may choose to follow, is made clear in the succeeding verses, whose study we will take up next week. And it is to the effect that the true knowledge of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrjña* leads to the adoption of the right rule of conduct, the universally valid law of unselfish altruism and absolute equality. We will stop here for the present.

lviii

We were dealing last week with the description of the *kshetra*. The term means, as we saw then, the body; and it comprises also such psychological phenomena as may be seen to owe their origin to the association of the soul with the body. Desire and aversion, pleasure and pain are thus *kshetra* in the sense that they are rooted more in the flesh than in the spirit. Now amongst the qualities and tendencies that we all possess, some can lead us on to self-realisation and God-realisation, while others bar our egress from the prison-house of *samsāra*. But it must be borne in mind that even these uplifting qualities appertain only to the souls suffering

from the bondage of *karma*. It is the essential nature of the soul to be *jñānānandamaya* and *nitya*. Any other quality that it may possess relates to its state of bondage; and whether it is good or bad, it may be said to be due to the body in the sense that it arises only when the soul is in association with the body.

If we bear this in mind, we will be able to understand the significance of the description of *jñāna* which we have to study now. You will note that the various elements that go to make up what is spoken of here as *jñāna* are all related to conduct. They are, as it were, ethical in their nature. *Jñāna* is not mere knowledge, but the moral realisation of truth in the practice of our lives. It is that kind of conduct which leads us to the knowledge of the nature of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña*. And this description of the nature of *jñāna* follows immediately after the discussion of the characteristics of the *kshetra* for the reason that the elements of the *jñana* mentioned here relate only to the shackled state of the soul and are thus of the nature of the *kshetra*. The later part of this chapter deals fully with the relations between the *kshetra*, *jñāna* and what will be presently described as *jñeya*. The point that we have been discussing so far will become clearer then. Now, let us proceed to the study of *jñāna*.

अमानित्वमदम्भित्वमहिंसा क्षान्तिरार्जवम् ।
आचार्योपासनं शौचं स्थैर्यमात्मविनिग्रहः ॥ ७ ॥
इन्द्रियार्थेषु वैराग्यमनहङ्कार एव च ।
जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधिदुःखदोषानुदर्शनम् ॥ ८ ॥
असक्तिरनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु ।
नित्यं च समचित्तत्वमिष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु ॥ ९ ॥
मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी ।
विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि ॥ १० ॥
अध्यात्मज्ञाननित्यत्वं तत्त्वज्ञानार्थचिन्तनम् ।
एतज्ज्ञानमिति प्रोक्तमज्ञानं यदतोऽन्यथा ॥ ११ ॥

7. Freedom from vanity, absence of pomp, freedom from the tendency to injure, forbearance, straightforwardness, service of a preceptor, purity, firmness, self-restraint,

8. Absence of desire in relation to the objects of the senses, and also freedom from egotism, the perception of evil in birth, death, old age, illness and pain,

9. Freedom from attachment, indifference to son, wife, home, etc., constant equanimity in meeting with both the desirable and the undesirable,

10. Undeviating and exclusive devotion to Me, resorting to places free from intrusion, distaste for the company of crowds,

11. Constant contemplation of the nature of the soul, seeing the meaning of the knowledge of the ultimate reality, (all) this has been declared to be knowledge. Whatever is otherwise is ignorance.

The qualities enumerated above constitute *jñāna* in the sense that they are calculated to lead one to the knowledge which saves. Let us bestow a little thought on every one of them. Seeing that Śrī Kṛishṇa has always been stressing the baleful effects of *ahaṅkāra* and *mamakāra*, it is no wonder that He should begin this account with freedom from vanity and absence of pomp. They mean much the same thing, but, if you like, you may make a distinction between the two by saying that the vanity mentioned is such over-estimation of oneself as leads one to insult or think lowly of others, while pomp may well stand for glorying in self-advertisement. *Ahimsā*, of course, has always been an essential part of the teachings of the *Gītā*, and, as we have seen, is a direct consequence of the experience of self-realisation and God-realisation. If *ahimsā* means freedom from the tendency to injure others, *kshānti* goes a step further; it implies the absence of inimical feeling even towards those who may have injured us.

Then we have straightforwardness. Falsehood is, of course, the parent of all vice, and truthfulness is the foundation on which all ethics is built. You may recall in this connection the story which I once told you of a young man, given over to all kinds of vice, who was reformed by a teacher who extracted from him a promise never to utter a lie. Willingness to learn is the beginning of all wisdom; and the service of a worthy preceptor is one of the

easiest ways of attaining the ends of life. Śaṅkarāchārya, as you may remember, counts association with great men as one of the rarest gifts of fortune. And what this service exactly means, we have already tried to understand in our study of IV. 34 (Vol. I. pp. 433-438). Next, we have *śaucham*, which stands for purity of thought, word and deed, physical as well as psychological cleanliness. This can never be achieved without *sthairyam*, firmness of resolution. A wavering and vacillating will can hardly help us to overcome the insidious attraction of the senses and the ingrained love of the self. A strong will, rightly directed, can accomplish for us *ātmavinigraha*, the restraint of the self.

When we have achieved this, we will have no love for the objects of the senses and no regard for the demands of the self. Nor will we have any illusions about the value of life. Taken all in all, the sorrows of life far outweigh its pleasures ; and it is part of wisdom to realise this. You may call it, if you like, pessimism, but it is well to note that this wise estimate of the value of life does not think lowly of its opportunities. Rightly used, life leads us on to the undying bliss of *moksha*. And it is in the light of that bliss that the joys of life appear tame and insipid, adulterated inevitably with the poison of misery.

Then, mention is made of detachment, the crowning virtue that will enable us to live and work in the world, and yet not be of it. One may take up the burdens of citizenship, rear a family and own a home ; indeed, one is called upon to do so at one stage in life. Love of wife and children is good ; it is a check on selfishness. But it must not blind us to wider claims. We must not live and move only in the narrow confines of the family. The love of God and the love of humanity have a greater authority over us. And when one is asked to be *anabhishvanga*, free from attachment, in relation to wife, home and children, one is merely asked not to make the natural love of wife and children a bar to the exercise of a more comprehensive love. And we will do well in this connection to bear in mind the special situation in which Arjuna was placed. One of his main objections to fight in the war was that he would have to kill his own kindred. While dealing with this objection of Arjuna, I remember to have drawn your attention to the fact that attachment to wife and children,

while good in itself, may sometimes stand in the way of the performance of duty, when that duty involves the sacrifice of the interests of family and kindred. Thus, at times, it may prevent us from so enlarging our sympathy and widening our love as to make justice and humanity dearer than kith and kin. Only such undesirable attachment is condemned here.

Then resort to places free from intrusion is recommended. Clear and steady thought requires freedom from distraction; and how can this be in the midst of the din and noise and bustle of a crowded neighbourhood? Indeed, association with crowds and mobs is definitely forbidden. Students of the psychology of crowds and mobs will tell you that a crowd or mob behaves like an irresponsible child or a primitive savage. Its emotions are more easily stirred than those of any individual; and it is incited more readily to reckless action. Reasoning and thought are practically absent in a crowd, and it is quickly hypnotised by all kinds of suggestions. There is no easier way of losing what little power of reasoning one may have than to join a crowd. And if only for this, one may exercise some caution in associating with crowds. It is only in this sense that we have to understand the injunction to shun crowds. In the regulations laid down in our *smṛitis* for the conduct of students, they are enjoined not to get into the midst of crowds frequently, in order that they may pursue their studies without distraction. Here, too, a similar objective must be understood. We are merely asked not to take any special delight in associating with crowds and mobs, but by no means to live like solitary misanthropes, Timons hating all mankind.

Having ordered our relations with society in this manner, we must contemplate on the nature of the self and try to see the significance of the ultimate reality. This will inevitably lead us to exclusive and undeviating devotion to God—the devotion, as described in VII. 16, of the wise man, who looks upon it as an end in itself. It may be noted in passing that the word, '*nityatvam*', in the expression, '*adhyātma-jñāna-nityatvam*', which I have translated as constant contemplation of the nature of the self, has been understood by a well-known commentator as *niratatvam*. That is, we are asked to be constantly engaged in the

endeavour to attain self-realisation, never forgetting for a moment that the soul is fundamentally different from the body.

Here we have the various elements, which, when put together, constitute the *jñāna* or wisdom with which we have to guide our lives. Every one of the elements of the *jñāna* mentioned here relates more to conduct than to thought. They are the various attributes by developing which we will be able to attain the knowledge which leads us on to deliverance. They are all said to constitute knowledge for the reason that they are the means of attaining knowledge. Whatever is not knowledge is naturally *ajñāna*, wrong knowledge or ignorance. Understood in special relation to conduct, the term, '*ajñāna*', may well signify in this context all undesirable traits of character which stand in the way of our attaining the knowledge of the self and God.

Having explained the nature of knowledge, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to enlighten us upon its object. If one is told by a teacher that a particular course of conduct must be adopted, one will naturally ask why. He must answer the question by pointing out a specific goal to be reached. This, he would say, is the way which leads us on to the destination we have to reach. So now, Śrī Kṛishṇa points out the goal by *jñeya*, the thing to be known.

ज्ञेयं यत्तत्प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वाऽमृतमश्नुते ।
अनादिमत्परं ब्रह्म सत्तन्नासदुच्यते ॥ १२ ॥

12. I shall (now) speak of that which is the thing to be known, by knowing which (one) attains immortality—that Supreme *Brahman*, having no beginning, which cannot be said to be existent or non-existent.

Here Śrī Kṛishṇa identifies the object of knowledge with God. It is God alone who has to be sought with the eloquence of good deeds and the practice of the virtues described collectively as *jñāna*. And it is the knowledge of God alone which can confer immortality. We have already tried to understand what is meant by the attainment of immortality. All souls, whether bond or free, are immortal; but the souls imprisoned in the meshes

of *karma* are subjected to a series of births and deaths in the bodies with which they become associated. Freedom from the necessity of transmigration and the re-attainment of unmixed bliss may well mean for the soul something like the attainment of immortality. The knowledge of God then delivers us from the bonds of *karma*. The question then naturally arises: in what terms shall we know God? Śrī Kṛishṇa describes in the succeeding verses succinctly what has already been taught in various places in the *Gītā* about the nature of God. It is an account which, as we shall see, closely follows the *Upanishads*.

First of all we are told that God cannot be said to be either existent or non-existent. This looks like a paradox; but as we have already had occasion to see (cf. IX. 19, XI. 37), the self-contradiction vanishes in the light of a simple explanation. What is meant is obviously that God is not existent in the sense in which the perceivable entities of the universe are existent. He is not phenomenally existent. Our senses cannot realise Him. Of the great astronomer, Laplace, it is said that he surveyed the heavens with his telescope and could see no God. That surely is not the way to arrive at a knowledge of God. Any one who holds that there is no source of knowledge beyond the data of the senses is a materialist; *prakṛiti* operates as *āsurī* in relation to him. But when it operates as *daivī*, it leads us to a knowledge of something beyond the *prākṛita-prapañcha*. Behind the veil of the phenomenal universe, God may be seen and realised. The Supreme *Brahman* may thus be considered to be existent from one point of view and non-existent from another. If we may borrow the terminology of Kant, we may say that, phenomenally, God is non-existent, but that, noumenally, He is existent. This need not necessarily commit us to all the implications of the system of Kant, nor to any definite view about the reality of the world.

What I mean to make clear to you is this. God is not an entity like any that we can observe in Nature. We cannot realise Him with the help of our senses. But because no man has seen God as one sees stars or stones, we cannot say that God is absolutely non-existent. He is not realisably existent. But the supra-conscious state of *samādhi*, which the *yogins* attain, is held by all schools of Hindu thought to be capable of making God the

object of a vivid experience. The statement, then, that God is both *sat* and *asat* is neither absurd nor paradoxical.

There are, of course, other ways of resolving this apparent contradiction. We may say that in the state of *pralaya*, when the universe of organised differentiated beings ceases to exist, God is non-existent. For, we employ term, 'existence', only in relation to the world of our experience, and existence in the state of *pralaya* must be fundamentally different from what it is known to be now. Seeing that God is the seat of the origin and the dissolution of the world, it should be easy for us to understand how He can be both *sat* and *asat*, *prakṛiti* in its manifested as well as unmanifested forms.

According to Śaṅkarāchārya, the Supreme *Brahman* cannot be the object of either positive or negative knowledge. For such knowledge can arise only in respect of entities which can be understood with the help of our senses. The Absolute is devoid of all attributes, possesses no quality and performs no action. It is not related to anything else. It is one without a second. No term in language can describe it. It is thus not existent in any sense familiar to our experience; but it is *sat* because it is revealed by the *śruti*.

Rāmānujāchārya understands by the term, '*jñeyam*', only the individual soul. He contends that the term, '*Brahman*', is sometimes used to denote the finite self and construes the second line of the *śloka* thus: *anādi mat-param brahma*, etc., which may be translated as "*brahman*, which is beginningless and in relation to which I am supreme". Thus the term, '*brahman*', is dissociated from the epithet, '*param*'. Now, how can the individual self be described as both *sat* and *asat*? The souls, as long as they are bound, can be in either of two states—the state of *pralaya* and the state of *sṛishṭi*. In the state of *pralaya*, they may be said to be in a subtle causal state; whereas in the state of *sṛishṭi*, they represent the manifested effect of their *karma* by becoming associated with various kinds of bodies, human, divine, etc. But essentially, these two states do not belong to the soul. In the *mukta* state of unhampered freedom and unmixed bliss, the souls cannot be said to represent either the manifested effect or the unmanifested cause.

Śrī Krishṇa further describes *jñeya* as:

सर्वतः पाणिपादं तत्सर्वतोऽक्षिशिरोमुखम् ।
सर्वतश्श्रुतिमल्लोके सर्वमावृत्य तिष्ठति ॥ १३ ॥

13. With hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads and mouths everywhere, possessed of ears everywhere, It stands enveloping everything in the world.

What is taught in this stanza follows naturally, as we saw, from the vision of *viśvarūpā*. By saying that the Supreme *Brahman* has hands and feet everywhere, Śrī Krishṇa must be understood to declare that God can be seen at work everywhere, although He is not *sat* in the sense in which material entities are. Without Him, there can be no life nor movement, no energy nor action in this universe; for the source of all these is the Supreme *Brahman*. And then He has eyes and heads and mouths everywhere, and is everywhere possessed of ears, because He sees, thinks, speaks and hears through everything in the universe. If any of us hear or see or think, it is because He hears or sees or thinks through us. All this describes God as intimately immanent in the universe and closely concerned in its activities. But, as we have seen, God also transcends the universe at the same time that He infills it. And this fact is well brought out by the statement that He envelops all things in the universe, which means obviously that He is greater than the universe.

We may note in passing that Śaṅkarāchārya interprets this stanza to mean that the one and only *Kshetrajña* is conditioned by the *upādhis* of the sense-organs of all living beings, which constiture in their totality the *kshetra*. He adds that all the variety caused in the *Kshetrajña* by the variety of the *upādhis* is only illusory. According to Rāmānujāchārya, this verse describes further characteristics of the individual soul. The finite self, in its state of emancipated bliss, can exercise the functions of the sense-organs everywhere. The authority for this is declared to be, firstly, that God is described in the *śruti* as exercising the functions of various sense-organs without possessing them, and, secondly, that the finite self in its state of freedom is believed in many respects to attain to similarity with God.

सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाभासं सर्वेन्द्रियविवर्जितम् ।
असक्तं सर्वभृच्चैव निर्गुणं गुणभोक्तृ च ॥ १४ ॥

14. Shining with the functions of all the senses, but devoid of all the senses; unattached, yet supporting all; devoid of (the) *guṇas* (of the *prakṛiti*), yet the enjoyer of *guṇas*.

When we say that God sees and thinks and speaks and hears through everything in the universe, we are apt to imagine that God possesses organs of sense in the manner in which we possess them. This surely is a mistake. To think of God as seeing with the aid of eyes, thinking with the aid of brains and so forth is to degrade Him to our level. For, if He has organs of sense in His essential nature, He becomes limited by *prakṛiti*. If He has eyes, He can see only what His eyes empower Him to see. That is, His power is limited by the power of *prakṛiti*. The blind man, for instance, is blind, not because his soul is blind, but because he does not possess sound eyes. In our case, it is thus easy to see how the power of the soul to see is limited by the power of the physical instrument which it has to employ. And if we make God's vision dependent on the possession of eyes, then certainly we make Him subject to the limitations of *prakṛiti*. This is against the whole trend of the teachings of the *Vedānta*, which holds *prakṛiti* to be a slave under God. So He does not possess these organs of sense, but can exercise their functions in unhampered freedom, depending on no physical instrument conditioned by *prakṛiti*.

Then He is declared to be unattached, while being the bearer of everything in the universe. Here is an apparent contradiction in terms. Physically, it is inconceivable to think of any one being unattached on the one hand and the bearer of everything in the universe on the other. 'Being unattached' means that God is radically different from *prakṛiti*. But if God is the supporter of everything in the universe as well, He must be intimately immanent in the universe, pervading everything, and exercising responsibility for the life and work and energy of all beings in the universe. While He is immanent in this manner, He is still not to be identified with *prakṛiti* or material Nature.

If we try to understand the relation between body and soul, that may help us to some extent in understanding the relation between the universe and God. The first point to note is this. We all say that the soul is immaterial, even though normal experience can only testify to the existence of the embodied soul. That is, the soul, in spite of its embodiment, does not become material. Its essential nature, as we have seen, is pure consciousness. Its close association with matter does not endow it with any of the attributes of matter. In spite of the material embodiment, it retains its pristine purity and continues to preserve its character as pure, undefiled consciousness. If we can undertand this, then we can easily see how God, who pervades the whole universe, preserves His own divine nature and keeps it undefiled by His contact with Nature.

Let us now try to see the significance of the statement that God is the bearer of everything. Here also, we will do well to take note of the analogical relation that subsists between body and soul. Let us start with the statement frequently made that the body must be subordinated to the soul. This in fact is the teaching of all religions. All morality consists in sacrificing the interests of the body to those of the soul. This means that at times we experience conflicts between the demands of the body and those of the soul. Man, as it has been said, is a compound of mud and sky. He is the seat of a double trend of thoughts and tendencies, one leading him upward to God, and the other of the earth, earthy. These latter forge for us the fetters of *karma* and keep us in the penitentiary of *samsāra*. If we are to gain freedom for our souls, we must resolutely conquer the desires of the flesh. Every moment of our lives there is a moral conflict between the *prakṛiti* and the *purusha* in us; and every moment furnishes us an opportunity to set our faces towards the light and to take our first step on the road to perfection. The emancipation of the spirit must be the object of all our endeavour. In the language of the Sāṅkhya philosophy, the end of universal evolution is the re-attainment of perfect freedom by the soul. Even some modern thinkers admit that some kind of progress must be the purpose of evolution, and it cannot all be a meaningless sequence of events.

The fact that we cannot go back to the beginnings of *karma* nor understand how matter and mind first came together is no reason why we should doubt that they are in close association now, and that this association puts limitations on the powers of the soul to know and to enjoy. Rightly understood, the body is for the soul; it is an instrument wherewith the soul can obtain its lost freedom. And so we may say that the soul is the bearer of the body in the sense that it is the more important part of that composite structure of matter and spirit which we call an embodiment. In like manner, God is the bearer of everything in the universe. In other words, the whole universe exists to serve the ends of God. While He is *asakta*, altogether unattached, He still supports and bears the universe. That is to say, He orders the destiny of the universe and directs the stream of evolutionary changes towards the end He has in view.

This point is made clearer by the statement that God is both *nirguṇa* and *guṇa-bhoktṛi*. Here also, we may press into service the rough similarity that holds between the relation of the finite self to its material body on the one hand and the relation of God to the univer e on the other. The first question to consider is this. Does the association of the soul with the body modify the nature of the former as pure consciousness? Because of the embodiment, does the soul get transformed into something which is partly consciousness and partly material? We have seen that this cannot be. Remaining unchanged in its essential nature, the soul cannot be characterised by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. We cannot speak of one soul as *sāttvika*, another as *rājasa* and so on. The robber may be characterised by *tamas* and the saint by *sattva*. None the less, it remains true that the soul of the robber, considered by itself, is in no way different from the soul of the saint, similarly considered. Apart from the embodiments, the soul is incapable of being characterised by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. In its essential nature, the soul is *nirguṇa*.

At the same time, there remains the fact that the body is the *bhogopakaraṇa* of the soul, the auxiliary instrument through which the soul enjoys its experiences, pleasurable or painful. Leaving aside the nature of the experience of the soul in its free state, we know that in its embodied state the body is essential for

its experiences. Without the eye, we cannot see; without the ear, we cannot hear. And leading this argument to its logical conclusion, without the body, we cannot experience. And this experience is naturally coloured by our physical constitution. We see only what our eyes enable us to see, and hear what our ears empower us to hear. All men do not feel alike in exactly similar circumstances, because of constitutional and temperamental differences. In this way, the soul may be considered to be *guṇa-bhoktṛi*, the enjoyer of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*.

Similarly, God is both *nirguṇa* and *guṇa-bhoktṛi* at the same time. In His own essential nature, He is *aprākṛita*, above and beyond the universe. This, in spite of His immanence in the universe. Nevertheless, on account of His *yoga* or intimate relation with the universe, we know that He is the guide and goal of the universe. The process of the universe is not a meaningless sequence of events; it does not arise from a fortuitous concourse of atoms. There is a plan and purpose behind it all. The universe exists for His sake and evolves to the end He has in view. In this sense, He may well be deemed to be *guṇa-bhoktṛi*, for the life of the universe is inseparably associated with the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*.

One or two more points may be brought to your attention before I close to-day's work. The commentary of Śaṅkarāchārya on this verse, of course, explains all the positive attributes of God mentioned here, such as the possession of the senses, the capacity to enjoy the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, etc., as belonging to the *prākṛita-prapañcha*. It is true only from a relative standpoint and is essentially unreal. The explanations of Rāmānujāchārya, relating these attributes to the individual soul, we have already understood in a way in the study of the analogies between the relation of the soul to the body on the one hand and the relation of God to the universe on the other. There is no need, therefore, to dilate on that topic. As it is late, kindly allow me to conclude here our work for to-day.

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You may remember that we were dealing last time with the characteristics of *jñāna* and *jñeya*. What is described as *jñāna*, we then learnt, is not mere knowledge, but such a course of

conduct as leads to the knowledge which saves, the knowledge, namely, of the distinction between the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña* and of all that it implies. It is only by distinguishing between the demands of the flesh and the call of the spirit that we can guide our lives aright. The term, '*jñeya*', literally means that which has to be known, but it is used here in the sense of the only thing worthy of being known and hence the only thing to be attained unto. The *Upanishads* declare that the Supreme *Brahman* is the only thing worthy of being known, as by knowing It everything else becomes known.

Let us now continue our study of *jñeya*.

बहिरन्तश्च भूतानामचरं चरमेव च ।
सूक्ष्मत्वात्तदविज्ञेयं दूरस्थं चान्तिके च तत् ॥ १५ ॥

15. Within and without all beings, movable and also immovable, It (is) unknowable on account of its subtlety. It stands far away and (is) also near.

Here again we have a series of contradictory attributes. Even modern philosophy holds that the *jñeya, par excellence,* is full of contradictions. In trying to describe what is sometimes called God, sometimes the Absolute, and again the Unknowable and so forth, even the best of philosophers are baffled; and very frequently their descriptions are full of apparently irreconcilable contradictions. The *Īśāvāsyopanishad*, for instance, contains a description of God through antithetical attributes. It is, perhaps, with a view to obviate this difficulty that the sages of the *Upanishads* declare that God can be described only negatively. You can say that God is not this, nor that particular thing. In fact, take anything whatever; you can say that it is not God. But you cannot definitely say what or who God is. Whether this means that God is absolutely beyond human ken, we shall try to see presently.

What exactly is the significance of the statement that the *Brahman* is both within and outside all beings? A thing cannot be at two places at the same time. My watch cannot be both within and without my pocket simultaneously. But we have learnt

that the Infinite God is both transcendent and immanent. Though He dwelleth on high, yet He is established in the hearts of all. He is within every one, because He is the *antaryāmin* of all. And He is outside of all, because He transcends the universe. The infinitude of God is in no way affected by His immanence. Now, what pervades the universe and is above and beyond it cannot move. Unless there is another universe which is not filled and pervaded by Him, God cannot be looked upon as moving. For motion implies the existence of a place where one is not, whither one moves from the place where one is. God being everywhere cannot be thought of as moving like us from place to place. Yet He is characterised as *chara* here for the reason that, being immanent in the universe, we may think of Him as moving along with those beings within whom He lives.

Then God is said to be unknowable on account of His subtlety. What is meant is that we cannot arrive at a full and definite knowledge of God. Knowledge always implies definite attributes and characteristics in the thing known. And when anything has definite attributes or characteristics, it becomes limited and conditioned. By knowing what a thing is, we also know what that thing is not. Everything which is known is thus finite. And God who is all things and is everywhere, who is both transcendent and immanent at the same time, cannot be limited or conditioned in any manner. In Western thought a peculiar difficulty is sometimes felt in regard to the Absolute. Infinity is one of the essential characteristics of the Absolute. And to continue as infinite, it must be unknowable. If it is unknowable, how can we talk about it, how can we know that it exists? Thus the Absolute, to be the Absolute, must be unknowable; and of anything unknowable, we cannot even affirm that it exists; for knowledge of its existence brings it within the realm of the knowable. The answer to this is that the Absolute is unknwoable in the sense that we cannot know it definitely in the manner in which we know the universe around us. It is, of course, partially knowable. And this qualification must be borne in mind in considering the statement made here that the Supreme *Brahman* is *avijñeya*, not to be known. Not to be known, that is, fully and completely. In His supreme transcendental condition, God is essentially unrealisable, remote and unapproachable. He is, as

it were, far away. But this does not distress the *bhakta*, who always finds the Lord near at hand, seated within his heart, and none can be nearer to us than the One who is seated within our hearts. "Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet." In this manner, He is both far and near.

According to Śaṅkarāchārya, the indivisible Supreme *Brahman* appears through *māyā* to be both the external universe and the internal self, with reference to the body which is mistaken to be the real self. And this body, which may be either at rest, *achara*, or in a state of motion, *chara*, is also to be identified with the *Brahman*. In other words, the universe is here analysed into (i) the body, (ii) the individual self, which is conceived to be within the body, and (iii) the external world, which is believed to lie outside the body; and each of these three parts is identified with the *Brahman* in order to show Its pervasion of the universe. These divisions, however, are entirely illusory and arise out of the limiting conditions of the phenomenal universe. As it is rather difficult to grasp this truth, the *Brahman* is here declared to be far away—far away, that is, to the unwise, who tread the path of *samsāra*, mistaking illusion for reality. But for the wise, It is very near, being their very self.

Rāmānujāchārya, as we have seen, understands by the term, '*jñeya*', the individual soul in this context. In his view, the finite self may be looked upon as both within and outside beings, because it may be either embodied or not. Likewise, it may be either at rest or in a state of motion along with the body which it inhabits. And, of course, for one who is embodied, it is rather difficult to realise the true nature of the self, which is often confounded with the body. Those, however, who are endowed with the *jñāna* which has only been recently described (verses 7 to 11), can always find their selves near at hand.

अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम् ।
भूतभर्तृ च तज्ज्ञेयं ग्रसिष्णु प्रभविष्णु च ॥ १६ ॥

16. Undivided and yet remaining as though it were divided among beings, It is to be known as the supporter of (all) beings and that which devours and creates (them).

When we say that God is immanent within all beings in the universe, do we imply that the one God becomes divided into an infinite number of bits so as to be deposited in the various beings in the universe? Surely not. The God who is immanent within me is the same at the God who is immanent within you. There is only one God, and He is immanent in the infinite number of beings in the universe. But this does not mean that He becomes divided into as many parts as there are beings in the universe. What is meant is that He is within all beings by virtue of His all-inclusive pervasion of the universe. By being *sarvāntaryāmin*, penetrating all, He is within all beings and at the same time one and only one. But He seems as if He were split up into various parts. Sometimes we say that an *amśa* of God is within each being. This, however, is only a definite way of expressing an idea which cannot be otherwise accurately expressed. Then the *Brahman* is declared to be the creator, the maintainer and the destroyer (lit. swallower) of the world. Ordinarily, we should not expect all these three functions to co-exist in one. But as God is the source of all power and activity in the universe, He is responsible for all that takes place in the universe, whether it is *sṛishṭi* or *sthiti* or *laya*.

In commenting on this verse also, Śaṅkarāchārya invokes the aid of *māyā*. The *Brahman*, which is the sole reality, is one, but through *māyā* appears to be manifold. And in the fundamentally unreal phenomenal universe, He is looked upon as creating, sustaining and destroying. According to Rāmānujāchārya, the oneness predicated of *jñeyā* in the first line has reference merely to the essential similarity of all the finite selves. They are all of the nature of knowledge and can be realised as such by the *jñānin*. The *ātman*, again, is the supporter of the body. It swallows food and determines the evolution of the food so eaten into ever fresh blood and brawn in the body. If it be objected that the functions here attributed to the soul really appertain to the body, the answer is that the corpse can neither eat nor digest food. It is the presence of the soul within that maintains life and all the functions of life.

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसः परमुच्यते ।
ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदि सर्वस्य विष्ठितम् ॥ १७ ॥

17. It is the Light of lights and is said to be beyond darkness. (It is) knowledge, the object of knowledge, and that which is to be reached through knowledge. (It is) established in the hearts of all.

I have often drawn your attention to the fact that consciousness is frequently compared to light in Hindu philosophy. A lamp in a dark room makes itself manifest and also makes other things manifest to us. It is self-luminous and at the same time illumines other things. Similarly consciousness is aware of itself as well as of other things. I feel, therefore I am. I am aware of my existence through my consciousness. And it is through the consciousness again that I know of any other thing besides myself. Thus consciousness is the light which manifests itself and makes other things manifest. And it is God who illumines the light of our consciousness. Our consciousness is what it is, because of God. He is thus the 'Light of lights'. In the famous phrase of the *Upanishads*, He is *chetanānām chetanaḥ*. The whole universe is illumined by the light that radiates from Him. Just as consciousness is the light of life, so God is the light of consciousness.

Then the Supreme *Brahman* is declared to be *tamasaḥ param*. This phrase is generally taken to mean 'beyond darkness'. If so understood, it may seem to mean much the same thing as Light of lights. Indeed, it is a pale negation beside that emphatic and positive phrase. For this reason, commentators have tried to see whether it can give us any other meaning. The view has been put forward that '*tamas*' may stand for Nature, in which case the phrase would affirm the supremacy of God over Nature. It has also been suggested that '*tamas*' may mean *ajñāna* or *avidyā*, cosmic ignorance or nescience. God is obviously uncontaminated by nescience. I venture to suggest that we may look upon the expression, '*tamasaḥ param*', as meaning the furthest limit of darkness. Such a meaning would be specially appropriate in this context, where God is described by a series of antithetical attributes; and what can be the antonym of 'Light of lights' other than the darkest darkness? The question then arises: What is meant by describing God as the furthest limit of darkness? It seems to me that we are taught here that God is essentially

unknowable. We have already seen that none can understand the Divine fully and completely. However much we may try, we reach only a blank wall, beyond which the light of human knowledge may not reach. As Śrī Kṛishṇa has declared, God is *avijñeya* by reason of His subtlety.

In spite of this, however, God is the one object that has to be known, if the purpose of life is to be fulfilled. Known, that is, as well as is possible. And He is to be known as *chaitanya*, being of the nature of consciousness. In the language of Christianity, God is spirit. God is the object of knowledge, and He is essentially of the nature of knowledge. From this it follows that He can be reached only through knowledge. He is, therefore, *jñeya*, *jñāna* and *jñānagamya*. We may note in passing that it has been suggested that the term, '*jñāna*', in the expression, '*jñānagamya*', has to be understood with a volitional significance. The idea is that the knowledge with which we have to reach God is not mere intellectual realisation alone, but that it includes the flowering of conviction into conduct. *Jñāna* is the life of wisdom, such as has been described above in verses 7 to 11.

Such in brief is the nature of God. With this verse, the description of *jñeya* is brought to a close. Śrī Kṛishṇa is careful to remind Arjuna at the very last that God is after all to be sought within the heart, however great His power and however universal His pervasion. If our soul is awakened, we may see the God who is hidden in the cave of our heart and know the one thing by knowing which everything else becomes known. All these antithetical attributes that we have been studying so far need not make God a riddle to us. Subtle as He may be, eluding the grasp of perfect knowledge, He is at the same time easily accessible to the quest of devotion. This point is well brought out in the next stanza, which reads thus :

इति क्षेत्रं तथा ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं चोक्तं समासतः ।
मद्भक्त एतद्विज्ञाय मद्भावायोपपद्यते ॥ १८ ॥

18. Thus the *kshetra* and likewise knowledge and the object of knowledge have been described in brief. Knowing this, My devotee becomes fit to attain to My state.

There is difference of opinion among the great teachers of the *Vedānta* on the exact significance of the phrase, 'My state', which occurs in this stanza. Some interpret it as meaning that the ultimate destiny of the soul is the realisation of its identity with God. Others understand it to suggest that the soul, in its state of emancipation, is God-like in its freedom from the bondage of *samsāra* and in its realisation of its own nature as knowledge and bliss. Whatever view we may adopt, the main point to note is this. Our destiny is carved by the kind of life that we lead. Empty knowledge divorced from conduct can lead us nowhere.

Note that Śrī Kṛishṇa does not promise the reward of salvation to any one who merely knows what has here been taught —knows it, that is, in a perfunctory and careless manner. A mere intellectual appreciation of the nature of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña* and even of the means of attainment of the final goal of all human endeavour is futile. How often we know the better and do the worse! That is why Śrī Kṛishṇa insists that knowledge is of no value if it does not change the inner nature of man. And for the same reason, He has invested the term, '*jñāna*', with a profound ethical significance. We must learn the art of knowing the truth with the whole of our being. Knowing the truth means much the same thing as living it. It is only one who has attained knowledge in this way, that is here declared to be fit to attain unto His state.

Mere intellectual apprehension gives us only a partial and fragmentary knowledge of truth. Knowledge cannot be called real unless it can transform the soul of the knower. Can we think of mere philosophy, howsoever learned, subtle and analytical it may be, giving *bhakti* to one who is not a *bhakta*? Metaphysical reasoning is not to be monopolised by either the theist or the atheist. It helps the one quite as much as the other. It is, therefore, quite appropriate that Śrī Kṛishṇa should regard the possession of *bhakti* as a necessary additional qualification for fitness to attain salvation, over and above a knowledge of the nature of the *kshetra*, the *kshetrajña* and *jñāna*. The classification and analysis which Śrī Kṛishṇa has given here will be of use only to the *bhakta*. Besides understanding the teachings of this

chapter, our hearts must be attuned towards devotion to God. Or we may say that the knowledge of Śrī Kṛishṇa's teachings will give rise to devotion which, in turn, will confer on us the fitness to attain salvation. In either case, we will do well to note that *bhakti* is here looked upon practically as a *sine qua non* for the realisation of the true destiny of the soul.

In describing soul and matter as *kshetrajña* and *kshetra*, Śrī Kṛishṇa has emphasised their mutual relationship. To define the soul as the knower of the field is to describe it in terms of that field. Likewise, to speak of matter as the field for the play of the soul is to describe it in terms of the soul. This suggests that soul and matter have been thus related from the beginnings of time, because both matter and soul are without any beginning. So, Śrī Kṛishṇa declares :

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव विद्ध्यनादी उभावपि ।
विकारांश्च गुणांश्चैव विद्धि प्रकृतिसंभवान् ॥ १९ ॥

19. Know both *prakṛiti* and *purusha* to be beginningless. And know the *vikāras* and the *guṇas* to be born of *prakṛiti*.

I have already tried to explain to you what is meant by the statement that both *prakṛiti* and *purusha*, that is, the *kshetra* and *kshetrajñā*, are without beginning. It means nothing more than this—that, if we try to trace them back to their source, we fail. To illustrate this, the example is often given of the immemorial sequence of the tree from the seed and of the seed from the tree. It is foolish to ask : which came first, the tree or the seed ? Our logic cannot lead us beyond the fact that the growth of the tree from the seed and the birth of the seed from the tree must have always gone on. Note, however, that our inability to go back to the beginning of this sequence in no way nullifies our experience in regard to the tree developing from the seed, or the seed being produced from the tree.

Science tells us that matter is indestructible. In its totality, matter always continues to be the same. Changes certainly take

place, but there is no room for either complete annhilation or a fresh creation out of nothing. And we cannot trace matter back to its origin and find out how and whence it came into existence. But this does not alter the fact that matter does exist. The same argument holds good in the case of souls also. We have been taught that the soul is different from the body. It is neither born, nor does it die with the body. When one body dies, the soul passes on to a new body. When a new body is born, a soul, which was in existence somewhere else, enters it. It continues to live there, until the body goes through the various stages of growth, decay, and death, and once again, according to its burden of *karma*, it seeks a new body. And so on. It is as difficult to solve the problem of the origin of the soul as it is to solve the kindred problem of the origin of matter. But this does not contradict the fact of the existence of the soul. Matter and soul are within our daily experience. And because we cannot arrive at a solution of the problem of the origin of these entities, we are told that they are *anādi*, beginningless. This means no more than that we cannot know when and how and whence they came into existence.

The terms, '*vikāra*' and '*guṇa*', occurring in the second line of this stanza have given rise to some difference of opinion among the commentators. We have already come across the word, '*vikāra*', in *śloka* 6 of this chapter. It is generally understood in the sense of 'modification', and during the course of our study of that stanza, we tried to understand the explanation for the somewhat remarkable fact that desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, etc. were there declared to be *vikāras* of the body. Ordinarily, we would look upon these as belonging to the study of psychology and not to that of physiology. Nevertheless, the fact remains that these *vikāras* cannot have come into existence but for the association of the body with the soul. Hunger, as we saw then, may be a vivid and intense psychological fact, but it obviously arises out of the needs of the body. A disembodied soul need feel no hunger. In this sense, the *vikāras* are due to *prakṛti*. The *guṇas*, if the reference is to *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, belong obviously to *prakṛti*. An embodied soul may be characterised by any one of the three *guṇas*; but the soul in its essential nature is free from all the three *guṇas*.

It may be noted here that, according to Rāmānujāchārya, the *guṇas* stand for those qualities that have been comprehensively described as comprising *jñāna* in verses 7-11. The *vikāras* are understood to be desire, aversion, pain, pleasure and so forth. Both the *guṇas* and the *vikāras* are the effects of the association of the body with the soul, but the former are such as lead the soul onwards to deliverance and bliss, while the latter tend to confine the soul in its prison-house of flesh. Śaṅkarāchārya interprets the term, '*vikāra*', to mean all the appurtenances of the soul in its embodied existence from the discriminatory intelligence down to the physical body, while the *guṇas* are all those qualities that manifest themselves as pleasure, pain, delusion and other mental states to be described hereafter.

कार्यकारणकर्तृत्वे हेतुः प्रकृतिरुच्यते ।
पुरुषस्सुखदुःखानां भोक्तृत्वे हेतुरुच्यते ॥ २० ॥

20. *Prakṛiti* is said to be responsible for agency in relation to effects and causes, and the *purusha* is said to be responsible for the experience of pleasure and pain.

You may remember that, in the course of our study of the third chapter, we had occasion to consider the relations of *prakṛiti* to all kinds of work done in this world. Human activities, as we then saw, have necessarily to be physical in nature; they have to serve physiological ends. All our animal appetites are unconnected with the soul, and it is the need which is felt for their satisfaction that gives rise to the tangled skein of human life and achievement. We may look upon the physical universe as a complex chain of causes and effects, and as it is a fairly self-sufficient whole in itself and as all human work is physical in nature, we must attribute the agency of all work to *prakṛiti*.

A certain cause gives rise to a certain effect. For instance, I speak and you listen. My speaking is the cause of your listening. I feel I am the agent of speaking and you feel you are the agents of listening. Speaking and listening are physical acts and can be analysed in terms of the body. Here is a case where the agency for a chain of causes and effects is to be attributed to *prakṛiti*.

Let us now carry our analysis a step further. Few of us are able to regard with complete detachment any action with which we may be related. My speaking and your listening must have given rise to various degrees of pleasure and pain in us all. It is true that desire and aversion and pleasure and pain are all *vikāras* of *prakṛiti*. Their very existence is due to the association of the body with the soul. But that which experiences pleasure and pain cannot be *pṛakriti*, which is *jaḍa* or inert. Experience has no meaning except in relation to one who is conscious of it. The power to enjoy and experience belongs to the soul, while the raw matter of experience owes its origin to the association of the body with the soul. This point is made clear in the next stanza whose study we will take up presently.

One point here must be emphasised. The attribution of agency to *prakṛiti* in relation to the chain of causes and effects which constitutes the universe, need not necessarily negative the idea of the ultimate responsibility of God for all that goes on in the universe, nor imply that the soul is *nishkriya* and can never be looked upon as an agent. Rāmānujāchārya in his *Śrībhāshya* deals at length with the question (*Vedānta-Sūtras* : II. 3. 33 *et seq*.). All ethical mandates and prohibitions, he argues, imply that the soul is an agent and possessed of moral responsibility. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand why the soul should become entangled in the maze of *karma*. When it is said that *prakṛiti* alone acts in all our deeds, what is meant is that in the sphere of *samsāra* the activity of the soul is due, not to its own nature, but to its association with *prakṛiti*. Such a view does not contradict the teaching of the *Gītā*; for, in the eighteenth chapter the soul is stated to be one among a number of factors essential to any action. It is the idea that the soul is the sole agent in relation to work that is condemned throughout the *Gītā*. We create bondage for the souls only so long as we attribute to our souls the agency of deeds done under the promptings of *prakṛiti*. This view is not fully endorsed by the followers of *advaita*, according to whom the world of experience, which is built up of pleasures and pains, is only phenomenally real. The Supreme *Brahman*, who is identical with the individual soul, is essentially devoid of attributes and action.

We may note in passing that the terms, '*kārya*' and '*kāraṇa*', occurring in this verse have been variously interpreted by authoritative commentators. '*Kārya*', has been understood to be the body and the term, '*kāraṇa*', has been taken to mean the various sense-organs which are the door-ways of all experience. Another view is that out of the twenty-three *tattvas* of the Sāṅkhyas—all the *tattvas* except the soul—some may be called causes and others effects. There is also a reading, '*karaṇa*', for '*kāraṇa*', which Śaṅkarāchārya interprets as instruments. '*Kārya*' comprises the five elements that build up the body, the five sense-objects and indeed all modifications of *prakṛiti*. As '*karaṇa*' we have the five organs of sense, the five organs of action, *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahaṅkāra*, and all qualities such as pleasure, pain, delusion, etc., that are born of *prakṛiti* and are seated in the *karaṇa* or the senses. Whatever view we may prefer, the main point to be noted is this: that our actions are physical in character and are determined by physiological needs. Our experience in the world of *samsāra* owes its existence to the association of the soul with the body and can be explained in terms of *prakṛiti*. The next stenza makes this clear.

पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुङ्क्ते प्रकृतिजान्गुणान् ।
कारणं गुणसङ्गोऽस्य सदसद्योनिजन्मसु ॥ २१ ॥

21. Indeed, the *purusha*, seated within *prakṛiti*, enjoys the *guṇas* that are born of *prakṛiti*. Its association with the *guṇas* is the determining cause of (its) births in good and evil wombs.

Experience in the world of *samsāra* is possible only to an embodied soul. The *purusha*, seated within *prakṛiti*, experiences the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. We must understand the *guṇas* here to include the *vikāras* also. These latter vary in relation to the *guṇas*. A *sāttvika* person will have *vikāras* of a different type from a *rājasa* or a *tāmasa* person. The experience of the *guṇas* thus means the experience of the *vikāras* as well. Note, however, that the soul in its *muktāvasthā* or state of final release transcends the *guṇas* and *vikāras* of *prakṛiti*.

It is here declared that the determining cause of the birth of the soul out of good and evil parents is its association with the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. If we ask why some souls are born out of good parents and others of evil ones, why some souls win for themselves human embodiments and others animal ones, the answer is that these differences arise out of the association of different souls with different *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. And the *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* with which the soul is associated depends in turn upon the kind of life that the soul has been living from time to time. Now, if the character of an embodied being depends on the *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* with which he is in association, it is implied that the character of a person is dependent on his physical constitution. And I have often drawn your attention to the fact that modern science is now in a position to say that physical constitution has a great deal to do with mental and moral temperament.

The facts of heredity constitute an instance to the point. It is now known that the criminal becomes a criminal through tendencies and dispositions that he has inherited, even as the saint achieves saintliness through the potent influence of heredity. And then there is the interesting question of correspondence between what may be described as physical and intellectual types. They say, for instance, that a man with a protruding lower jaw, a retreating forehead and bulging eyebrows has a pronounced tendency towards crimes. A small head is believed to indicate idiocy. Some recent investigators have tried to define the characteristics of different physical types by means of an interesting method. A series of photographs is taken of a particular type of persons, criminals, for example, or those of a religious disposition. These photographs are superposed one over another. That is, first of all a criminal is photographed. Then over the same negative, the camera is made to impress the image of another criminal. And so on. When this is done, the common characteristics of the type gain emphasis. The special features of the criminal are prominently brought out. In this way we may try to understand the relation between physical features and mental or moral temperaments. We cannot, of course, answer the question why particular physical types should correspond with particular intellectual or moral temperaments. But some such correspondence seems pretty well established. And the next point to note

is that the nature of our physical constitution is determined largely by our parentage. What we are now physically is dependent on what our parents and other ancestors were. Likewise, what we are now determines the constitution of our children and other future descendants. So we are born good or evil by being born out of good or evil wombs.

If we believe in the *anāditva* of *purusha* and *prakṛiti*, then it logically follows that the kind of embodiment with which our soul is associated from time to time is determined by the burden of our *karma*, which in turn is dependent largely on the dominant *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* in our constitution. This does not necessarily deny all possibility of change. Indeed, there is ample scope for moral evolution. If our life has been one of purity and selflessness and devotion to duty, there is no reason to suppose that our body in our next birth will be dominated by criminal tendencies. Our soul may very well be expected to enter a body made for a saint. The progress of the soul in its moral evolution is determined by its life from incarnation to incarnation, and the nature of our parentage in the next birth is determined by the *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* dominant in our present life. A life lived under the sway of the *sattva-guṇa* will gain for us good and worthy parents in our next birth. These questions will become clearer when we study the next chapter, which goes by the name of *guṇa-traya-vibhāga-yoga*.

Please permit me to conclude here our work for today.

IX

You may remember that we were trying last week to differentiate the functions of *prakṛiti* and *purusha* in the life of normal experience, which arises out of the union of both. The work that we do and the life that we lead, we say, are predominantly physical in character. Only the glow of self-consciousness suggests a soul, fundamentally different from the *jaḍa-prakṛiti*, of which the body is made up. In the sphere of *samsāra*, however, its power is limited; it does not act from its own nature. It allows itself to be swayed by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. But over and above *prakṛiti*, which is responsible for our experience, there is One who controls it and determines the general

patterns of the soul's experience from incarnation to incarnation. Of the function and position of God in the life and experience of the embodied soul, Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to speak :

उपद्रष्टानुमन्ता च भर्ता भोक्ता महेश्वरः ।
परमात्मेति चाप्युक्तो देहेऽस्मिन्पुरुषः परः ॥ २२ ॥

22. The higher *purusha* within this body is spoken of as one who looks on and approves, as the supporter, the enjoyer, the great lord and also as the Supreme Self.

As the soul within the body works out its destiny, the *Īśvara* within the heart looks on and approves. Approval implies disapproval also. Sometimes unfavourable critics of Hinduism tell us that our religion lays very little stress on conscience. By conscience, of course, they understand that faculty within us which pronounces its judgment on the moral aspects of the life that we lead from time to time. If you tell a lie, your conscience chides you. If you are generous or helpful, your conscience approves of you. The function which is ascribed to conscience in European thought is assigned to the *Parama-purusha* in Hinduism. It is God Himself who watches every one of our acts and pronounces His judgments thereon from within the sanctuary of our hearts. The voice of conscience, in brief, is the voice of God. This view is emphasised throughout the *Mahābhārata*, and I remember to have drawn your attention on a former occasion to a striking stanza in the indignant speech of Śakuntalā to Dushyanta, wherein she observes: "And you think that you are alone. You do not know the ancient *Muni* who is sleeping within your heart. He knows the deeds of the evil-doer. In His presence, you are committing sin." It is clearly absurd to suggest that Hinduism ignores or minimises the function of conscience in moral life. We believe in conscience, and we believe in it not merely as the moral faculty within us, but as the very judgment of God, who is enshrined within every human heart.

God is then declared to be the supporter. He is not only a spectator of the life of the soul, a mentor pronouncing judgment on its acts, but also the *bhartṛi*, without whose support the soul

would cease to exist. This implies that God is superior to the soul and exercises authority over it. And that idea is very well brought out by the statement that He is the great lord. His sovereign authority over the soul is complete and unquestionable. The limited free will, which is the prerogative of the soul, tends to make the Lord an on-looker and adviser in the moral life of the soul; but we must not forget that all the while the Lord is the all-comprehensive support of the soul and exercises unimpeded authority over it.

All the powers of the soul are derived from God. The soul has already been spoken of as *bhoktṛi*, the enjoyer. But this power of the soul to experience and enjoy is derived from God, who is *jyotishāṃ jyotiḥ* and *chetanānāṃ chetanaḥ*. The Lord is the light of lights. Our consciousness is the result of the consciousness of God Himself. The experience of every soul is part of the experience of God. He is thus the *bhoktṛi, par excellence*. The power of the *purusha* to enjoy is derived, while that of the Lord is underived and self-originating. Similarly, we may argue that our sense of individual personality is to be traced to the personality of God Himself. By defining God as a person, we imply that He can be qualified by various attributes, though the infinitude of God makes it necessary that these attributes shall be infinite. God is thus the self behind the self, the Supreme Self, which lies at the very basis of our existence. He is, as it were, the soul of souls.

Such are the characteristics of the Supreme *Purusha* that manifest themselves in the life of the embodied soul. Note that God is here described as the *Parama-purusha* to distinguish Him from the soul. The term, '*purusha*,' as we have seen, may be taken to mean one who sleeps within the citadel of the body. The idea is that the true nature of the soul is obscured in its embodied existence, though our consciousness is due to the soul. Even as the soul sleeps within the body, the Lord also lies resting within the cave of our heart. If the soul is to be spoken of as *purusha*, the Lord must be characterised as the *Parama-purusha*.

We may note here that those who believe in the ultimate identity of the individual soul and God understand this verse to teach the essential nature of the soul, as contrasted with what it is

conceived to be in the life of *samsāra*. Another view is that only the individual soul, separate and distinct from God, is spoken of here. With reference to the body, it is an on-looker, which permits or controls the functions of life; it is further the support of physical life and exercises supreme authority thereon. The soul is thus the sovereign lord and supreme self of the vesture of clay it has donned.

य एवं वेत्ति पुरुषं प्रकृतिं च गुणैस्सह ।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि न स भूयोऽभिजायते ॥ २३ ॥

23. He who knows the *purusha* and *prakṛiti*, along with the *gunas*, is never born again, in whatever manner he may live.

One who has learnt the distinction between *purusha* and *prakṛiti* is here apparently assured of salvation solely on account of this knowledge. It may well be asked why there has been a sudden shift in emphasis from conduct to knowledge. I venture to suggest in reply that the term, 'knowledge', in such contexts must be understood with a volitional significance. What is referred to is not mere knowledge, but knowledge which has taken possession of our souls and transformed our lives. Hence we cannot interpret the phrase, '*sarvathā vartamāna*,' to indicate one who leads any kind of life whatever, even a life of unrelieved selfishness or sensuality. Indeed, such a life is impossible to one who has realised the saving knowledge of the fundamental distinction between the spirit and the flesh. Śrī Kṛishṇa here appears to be anxious to point out that the light of the spirit may shine equally well in the faces of people belonging to different stations in life.

The householder and the *sannyāsin*, the ploughman and the philosopher, all are equally fit to attain the enduring salvation of *moksha*. Provided one has understood how to distinguish the body from the soul and both from God, and also how to lead a life which is in accordance with that realisation, one is on the royal road to the emancipation of the soul, whatever the work one may perform in life and wherever one's lot may be cast. The labourer will as readily attain salvation as the philosopher,

provided he knows what we have been taught so far. The saint is as likely to be found among workers and peasants as among the professed teachers of religion. Whatever the position to which one may be called in life, one may attain *moksha* by gaining freedom from selfishness and sensuality. And as we have seen, this freedom, while being a logical corollary of the realisation of the true nature of matter, soul and God, may be gained in various ways. Most of these are briefly summed up in the two verses that follow.

ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना ।
अन्ये साङ्ख्येन योगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे ॥ २४ ॥

24. By meditation some see the self in themselves through unaided self-effort; others by speculative reasoning; and yet others through the practice of unselfish duty.

Three distinct ways of self-realisation are mentioned in this verse. There is first the method of *yoga*, in which one arrives at self-realisation in the supra-conscious state of *samādhi* by the practice of meditation and mental concentration. You may note in passing that the word, '*ātman*', occurs thrice in the first line of this stanza and each time perhaps in a different sense. Literally rendered, the line would read : Some see the *ātman* in the *ātman* through the *ātman*. The word, '*ātman*,' as you are aware, primarily means the self. Hence it is used in philosophy to connote both the soul and God. It is again frequently used as a reflexive pronoun. Sometimes it also stands for the mind. So we may understand the line to mean that some realise or see the selves in themselves through themselves by meditation, or that some see the selves in themselves by means of meditation through their minds. In either case, the reference obviously is to the practice of *yoga*.

The method of *sāṅkhya-yoga* that is mentioned next must be taken to be that of speculative analysis and theoretical discussion. Early enough in our study of the *Gītā*, you, will recall, we came across the use of the word, '*sāṅkhya*', in the sense of theory as opposed to practice. Lastly, mention is made of the path of

karma-yoga. It is not difficult to see that the mere practice of unselfish duty, begun from whatever cause, will in due time enable one to realise the meaning of life and thereby to realise that the soul is something other than the body and, being so, cannot be held to be responsible for the impulses and tendencies that belong to the body.

अन्येत्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वान्येभ्य उपासते ।
तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥ २५ ॥

25. And others, not knowing (it) in this manner, hear of it from others and worship. They, too, cross beyond death, being devoted to authoritative teaching.

There may be others who may not be able to realise the soul in any of the three ways mentioned above. They all imply a personal experience demonstrating the true nature of the soul. This experience is not easily gained. Śrī Kṛishṇa, therefore, in His customary manner proceeds to speak of those to whom this experience may not be vouchsafed. They, too, may cross beyond the weary cycle of *samsāra*, if only they care to listen to the voice of those who are authorised to speak on the ultimate aims of life. If we cannot know the truth ourselves, we need not be so obtuse as not to learn it from others who are in a position to know it. Learning the distinctive characteristics of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña* from those who have won for themselves self-realisation, and relying upon the authoritative teaching of the *śruti*, one may cross beyond death, that is, one may gain freedom from the forced association with *prakriti* which entails the experience of death in every incarnation.

A point of interest in this *śloka* is the position that is assigned to *śruti*, which is the Sanskrit equivalent of what is spoken of as Revelation in English. Religious revelation is considered authoritative all over the world. Christianity, Mohammedanism, Judaism and the religion of the Parsis have all their revealed scriptures. To the question why such scriptures should be considered as revealed and as teaching us authoritatively the nature of the truth regarding God, man and the universe, the answer is indirectly given in these two *ślokas*. Persons who are worthy and

honourable and who know the truth about any particular subject or incident are authorities in the sphere of, and to the extent of, their knowledge. Witnesses in law courts are taken as authorities only on such considerations. The statement made here that the *śruti* must be considered authoritative is justifiable on the ground that the *śruti* contains the teaching of those who know the truth and is, therefore, authoritative in the determination of the answers to the particular problems about which they had found out the truth.

Frequently, in the criticism of the Bible and of Eastern religious books, you will come across arguments against the value of revealed teaching on the ground that many statements in the ancient scriptures contradict the conclusions of modern science. Suppose, for instance, it is argued: "Nothing is stated in your scripture concerning the composition of water, which is in accordance with modern chemistry; indeed, what is stated there on the subject is definitely against the conclusions of science. And, therefore, the scripture cannot be true." The answer that is generally given to such an argument is to the effect that these scriptures must be regarded as authoritative, not in regard to matters about which they only deal incidentally, but only in regard to what constitutes their central theme. Revelation is nothing but the recorded experience of those, who, thanks to divine grace and mercy, have risen above the vanities and fleeting shows of this world, and through years of self-culture and self-restraint, have so purified their intellectual and moral nature as to recognise in their fulness and glory the invisible spiritual realities around. In their moments of glowing inspiration, the secret of the universe lies open before their vision.

The revealed scriptures are an original and comprehensive communication of the nature of the universe and its inner spiritual meaning to man. And the substantial similarity of the teachings of different ages and countries is a strong proof of their objective validity. We seek in them satisfaction for our religious and ethical needs, and that they are abundantly qualified to give. Details of scientific knowledge have little to do with the main contents of revelation, which deal with prophetic messages about God and His relations with the world. To criticise their incidental and

accidental excursions into the fields of exact science is pointless and irrelevant. To be dependent on the *śruti* in matters of faith indicates no weakness of mind, nor any betrayal of reason. We look upon the *śruti* as authoritative even though we realise but dimly its significance, because we feel that it records the experience of exalted souls who have pierced through the veil of *māyā*, and also because we have a reasonable hope that we, too, may be blessed with a like vision if we go through the necessary spiritual discipline.

यावत्सञ्जायते किञ्चित्सत्त्वं स्थावरजङ्गमम् ।
क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञसंयोगात्तद्विद्धि भरतर्षभ ॥ २६ ॥

25. Whenever anything is born, whether it is animate or inanimate, know, O Arjuna, that it is (so born) on account of the association of the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña*.

Having discoursed on the functions of *prakṛiti*, *purusha* and the *Parama-purusha* in all embodied beings, Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to point out that the entire universe is quickened and enlivened by spirit, and that to the eye of Truth there is nothing like dead matter anywhere. Man and brute, stocks and stones, 'living' as well as 'dead' matter, all are endowed with consciousness. Everything that comes into existence, be it animate or inanimate, is a composite structure consisting of *prakṛiti* and *purusha*. What makes us differentiate between living beings and inert matter, between men and animals and plants, is the varying intensity and power with which the principle of consciousness makes itself manifest in different instances. A study of biology is apt to show us that there is, as it were, a descending order in the manifestation of the power of consciousness when we pass from man to the lowest forms of life. And what is even more remarkable, the trail from man shows no definite or abrupt end. Almost at the other end of the scale stand some forms of life, of which we cannot say definitely whether they have consciousness or not. What we can only say is that certain material configurations offer more scope for the play of the soul than others. The fitter the material organisation, the greater the intensity of the manifestation of the power of the soul.

Many tests have been suggested at various times to differentiate between life and matter, between the possession of consciousness and its absence, but none of them has so far proved entirely satisfactory. There is the age-old criterion of the power to move of one's own volition ; there is the test of the power to reproduce. Again, attempts have been made to distinguish between those which absorb nourishment to build up fresh tissues and those which do not. One of the latest of these suggested criteria is the ability to respond to external stimuli, especially electric stimulation. And as you are aware (*vide* Vol. I. pp. 74–75), some interesting experiments of Professor J. C. Bose of Calcutta seem to suggest that both organic and inorganic matter show fundamental similarity in response to electric stimulation and in sensitivity to poisons. After all, we cannot have any direct evidence of the existence of consciousness in any one save our own selves. It is only in an inferential and indirect way and as a result of our observation of external behaviour that we can affirm that anything is possessed of consciousness. If reactions to various stimuli tend to show that no sharp dividing line can be drawn between the realms of the animate and the inanimate, then it is very probable that there is no ultimate difference between what is living and what is not. In fact, we may say that there is no such thing as an inanimate being in the universe.

There is no difference of kind but only one of degree between what we are generally accustomed to regard as the living and the lifeless. The sphere of the one shades off indistinguishably into that of the other. It is the failure to recognise this point of view that has given to rise to the various hypotheses that tend to confine the gift of the soul to man alone, or to men and animals alone, or to the world of life as distinguished from that of inert matter. To say, therefore, that every being born in the universe springs from the union of *prakṛiti* and *purusha* does not contradict any of the demonstrated conclusions of modern science.

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम् ।
विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥ २७ ॥

27. Whosoever sees the Supreme Lord abiding alike in all beings, never perishing when they perish—(truly) he (alone) sees.

Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to teach that all beings are not merely compounds of matter and mind, but also have God seated within them. If we can understand how all beings in the universe are associated with the principle of consciousness, we can easily see how in a similar way they may well have God seated within them. This God, who is so seated, remains for ever undestroyed, while being seated within what is destructible. It is necessary to draw your attention here to the fact that the term, 'destruction', must never be understood in the sense of complete annihilation. It means only mutation, a change from one condition to another.

There is nothing in the universe which is free from change and, therefore, free from decay and death. God, however intimately He may be associated with this universe of ceaseless change, remains always the same, changeless in the midst of change. In other words, He remains transcendent and immanent at the same time. So difficult is this concept to understand that it has been designated, as you may recall, the royal secret, and we may well bestow some attention on one problem which this dual character of God raises in the present context. Everything in the universe constitutes the *ādhāra* or support of God, because God is immanent in it. Inasmuch as God is contained within beings, it may be said that the various beings, whom God infills, are as it were containers. Generally the container is the support of whatever is contained. But God, while being contained within all, must also be viewed as the support of all, though not of course in the way in which one material object becomes the support of another.

Take, for instance, a pot of water. Here because water is contained within the pot, the pot is the support of the water. An analogy of this kind, therefore, fails entirely to illustrate the peculiar relation of God to the universe. It is with the object of affording some much-needed light on this question that the *Gītā* gives us the expressive and beautiful simile of the string that runs

through and supports the pearls in a necklace. Please observe that in the case of a pearl necklace, though the string may well be said to be contained within the pearls, it is also at the same time their supporter. Now by being the supporter, God cannot be affected by what He supports. The essential nature of the pot is in no way affected by the water being dirty ; a string can equally well support gems of flawless worth and those which are of distinctly inferior quality. The pollution of the water in the pot need not affect the pot any more than—shall we say—the soiling of the gems need affect the string that supports them. God can thus be looked upon as remaining unaffected by His close association with *prakṛiti*.

It is, however, well to observe that no material analogy can be satisfactory or be pressed too far. What we have to note is that God, while being seated within all beings, also transcends them at the same time and does not depend upon them for His existence. Everything in this universe is subject to change and decay and death, but He remains for ever changeless and eternal. All depend on Him for their very existence, but He is sovereignly free. Whoever sees God in this manner—he alone knows the truth.

The further question now arises : How will the knowledge of the Supreme Lord equally abiding in all beings, never perishing when they perish—how will knowledge of this fact affect our conduct ? The answer is given in the next *śloka*, which practically sums up for us the ethics of the *Vedānta*. Before taking up the study of that verse, we may note in passing that some hold that only the individual soul and not God is referred to in the stanza we have already studied. It remains true, of course, that the soul is not destroyed when the body dies and the word, '*parameśvara* ', may be taken to signify that the soul is the sovereign lord of the body. We may also note that the reference again to God in this context has been considered by an eminent authority to be due to Śrī Kṛishṇa's desire to emphasise that the Lord is equally present in all. In other words, as *antaryāmin*, He is present in all and is responsible for all existence. All are equal in the sense that all are abodes of God and that all owe their very existence to Him. What this fact means to us in moral life, Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to explain.

समं पश्यन्हि सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम् ।
न हिनस्त्यात्मनाऽऽत्मानं ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥ २८ ॥

28. Seeing God equally well established in all beings, one does not destroy one's self through one's self, and thus attains the highest goal.

So far, we have been taught that everything in the universe is associated with the principle of consciousness and has God seated within it. Anything may be analysed roughly into a material part, which we may designate *prakṛiti*, a part which is of the nature of consciousness, and God. If we realise this and apply the truth concerning their interrelations to our practical life, what kind of life are we likely to lead? In the first place, we have already learnt that in the life of the embodied soul, we have to distinguish between the demands of the flesh and those of the spirit. The former keep us tied and bound down to the endless chain of *samsāra*, while the latter show us the way to deliverance and bliss. When we understand this, we can easily see that a life of sensual indulgence, which pampers the flesh, is inconsistent with the realisation of truth in regard to the nature of the body and the soul. Any one who leads such a life has made a disastrous choice; when the door to freedom is open, he has of his own free will preferred a way of life which is not in harmony with the truth of things. In other words, he is deliberately trying to bring about his own ruin, he is destroying himself through himself.

Secondly, if we realise that the entire universe is pervaded and penetrated by God, that He is present in the elephant as in the dog, in the best as well as the worst of men, then the foundations of selfishness are undermined. If any one says, "I have to care only for my welfare and happiness most of all and then for the welfare and happiness of those whom I hold to be dear and near to me," then surely such a person is refusing to acknowledge the divinity in others. One is as much a home of God as another, and no one has any right to make one's self the centre of all of one's thoughts and emotions, ambitions and activities. Every one is related to God in the same manner. Whenever you indulge in selfishness, you must be believing that somehow you are related to

God differently from others, and that there is something peculiarly valuable about you which is not to be found in any one else. Thus selfishness is based on a flagrant denial of the universal immanency of God. And the selfish person, like the sensual one, leads a life which is not in accordance with the truth of things. And he, too, chooses the worse when the better is in sight and seeks to achieve nothing more or less than self-destruction.

To sum up. A life of sensuality, which elevates the body over the soul, contradicts the realisation of the truth in regard to the body and the soul. A life of selfishness contradicts the all-pervading character of God and ignores the great truth that, in His eyes, all are equal. Those who are selfish or sensual thus fail to realise the truth of things. They do not recognise their own good and act in a way which tends to win for them all the miseries of *samsāra*. It is thus that they bring about what may be called the suicide of their souls. But those who realise the universal immanence of God—or, according to another interpretation of this *śloka*, the equal status of all souls—lead a life free from sensuality and selfishness and eventually reach the supreme goal of all human endeavour.

प्रकृत्यैव च कर्माणि क्रियमाणानि सर्वशः ।
यः पश्यति तथात्मानमकर्तारं स पश्यति ॥ २९ ॥

29. He who sees all actions as being done by *prakṛiti*, and the self as not the doer (thereof)—he (alone) sees (truly).

Here it is further explained how the knowledge of the true nature of *prakṛiti*, *purusha* and the *Parama-purusha* can lead one to *parā gati*, the supreme goal which all strive to reach. The point that we have to note now is this. Even when we realise that a life of unselfish duty is obligatory and best calculated to lead us on to the enduring salvation of *moksha*, the question remains: How can such a life be led? One of the various methods suggested by Śrī Kṛishṇa for leading such a life is based upon a conscious attribution of the agency of all our deeds to *prakṛiti*. During the course of our study of the third chapter, we saw how deeds are universally done by the 'qualities' of *prakṛiti*. In our

state of embodied existence, all work and labour spring from the needs of our physical life. We live and labour and earn, not because we have souls, but because we are possessed of bodies which imperatively demand to be fed and satisfied. The soul by itself need neither eat nor work. And so, we have to note especially in this context that the differences that exist between individual and individual in the matter of work or achievement ought not to blind us to the equal status of all souls and their identical reliance on God. None of us has any right to say to any one : "I am greater than you, because I have earned and achieved more and eaten better than you." It is the material body of the speaker that has these achievements—if achievements they are—to its credit and not his soul, which is the same as or exactly similar to that of any other person. Any one who thus realises that his soul is not the agent and that all his work is impelled as well as executed by the *prakṛiti* of his body cannot consistently become attached selfishly to the deeds that he does. When this freedom from selfishness is won, the doors of Heaven, so to speak, lie open before us.

यदा भूतपृथग्भावमेकस्थमनुपश्यति ।
तत एव च विस्तारं ब्रह्म संपद्यते तदा ॥ ३० ॥

30. When (one) understands the independent individuality of all beings as being rooted in one basis, as also (their) evolution, then one attains to the *Brahman*.

One of the fundamental facts about this universe is its astonishing variety. The argument has so far been advanced that what is essential about this universe is its all-pervading support of soul and God. Whether this soul be one or many, the metaphysical basis for ethics remains the same. In the former case, any injury done to any one in this world is literally injury done to one's own self. In the latter case, the equal status of all souls in the presence of God and the genesis of all tendencies towards sensuality and selfishness from the nature of our physical embodiment make the same ethical law equally imperative. But it may be asked, if the *prakṛiti* of one embodied being works or earns more and eats better than that of another, why we should

not say that the *prakṛiti* of the one is different from that of the other. Judged from work and its effect, all are not alike, and to this extent, why may not selfish distinctions be allowed? This question is disposed of in this verse.

Every being in the universe has its own independent individuality. That is, it is different from every other being in the universe. Nevertheless, the whole universe has evolved from an original mass of undifferentiated 'matter'. As you are aware, the term, '*mūla-prakṛiti*', is employed to denote the primordial basis and original substratum of this universe of matter and energy. All the endless variety that we see about us may be traced back to this one basis, whence evolution has gone on. We must also note that this *prakṛiti* must be held to be a manifestation of the wonderful power of God, and that it evolves under the guidance of God. As you are aware, both the *Sāṅkhya* and the *Vedānta* believe that the evolution of the universe is for the emancipation of the spirit. None of us may venture to claim to know the mind of the Creator, but judging from the way in which the power of consciousness has asserted itself more and more, as we pass from the more primitive to the comparatively later products of biological evolution, it is not unreasonable to think that the evolution of the material *prakṛiti* is to serve the ends of the soul. The event to which the whole creation moves must have been planned and foreseen by God. Accordingly, all the different beings in the universe, so far as their material basis is concerned, have been evolved from the single root-source of *mūla-prakṛiti*, and ultimately the power of *prakṛiti* to evolve must be traced back to God Himself.

So then, even distinctions based on material differences between one embodied being and another cease to be of any value. Quite apart from the fact that even these differences may be resolved into the undifferentiated homogeneity of *mūla-prakṛiti*, the fact remains that all the modifications undergone by *prakṛiti* in its long course of evolution have been to enable the soul to attain its ends. If we are wise, we shall learn that it is in our own interests to base our conduct on the needs and necessities of our souls. Since there is little difference between one soul and another, there is no room for either selfishness or sensuality. When, therefore, one realises that the whole universe has evolved

immediately from *mūla-prakṛiti* and ultimately from God, who constitutes its all-pervading support, and regulates one's conduct accordingly, then one attains salvation.

अनादित्वान्निर्गुणत्वात्परमात्माऽयमव्ययः ।
शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते ॥ ३१ ॥

31. The immutable Supreme Self, O Arjuna, even while remaining in a body, neither works, nor is affected (by what the body does), on account of its having no beginning and of its being free from the *guṇas* (of *prakṛiti*).

In this stanza and the next, Śrī Kṛishṇa lucidly explains the peculiar relation of the immanent God to the beings whom He pervades. Anything that has had a beginning must surely have an end. All this universe is a regular whirl of change. But God, being without beginning, remains the same at all times. He is, therefore, not destroyed, when the bodies that He pervades perish. Let us also note again that destruction means merely a change of condition. Now, all these changing conditions of the universe are brought about by the play of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. As you are aware, physically, *rajas* is responsible for growth, *tamas* for decay, and the *sattva-guṇa* for maintaining the balance between the forces of growth and decay. As God is free from the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, He has no part in the changes of the various bodies He dwells in. Work again is mainly an attribute of embodied existence and is a physical concept. All work is impelled as well as executed by *prakṛiti*. God, being merely *upadrashṭṛi* and *anumantṛi*, may be said to do no work at all. We must, however, always bear in mind that the power to do work is derived ultimately from God. If He does not work, He cannot, of course, be affected by the results of any work. The evil effects of *karma* cannot stain Him. He is within us all, but the relation between Him and ourselves is such that He does not become subject to our weakness. The next stanza explains this position with the help of a noteworthy simile.

It is necessary to say here that the foregoing remarks on the relation between God and the various beings within whom He

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dwells may be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the relation between the souls and their embodiments. According to those who hold that only the individual self is referred to in this chapter, this stanza does not deal with God at all. The term, '*paramātman*', must be understood as the self, supreme within the body it dwells in. It is, of course, without beginning and free from the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. And the essential nature of the soul is not affected by the tendencies and dispositions of the body.

यथा सर्वगतं सौक्ष्म्यादाकाशं नोपलिप्यते ।
सर्वत्रावस्थितो देहे तथात्मा नोपलिप्यते ॥ ३२ ॥

32. As the all-pervading *ākāśa* is not tainted by reason of its subtlety, even so the *ātman*, though stationed in every body, is not affected (by material tendencies).

The term, '*ākāśa*', as you are aware, carries with it a peculiar technical significance. We are here, however, concerned only with the fact that it is an all-pervading substance. It is stated here that the *ākāśa* is not tainted by its contact with the material universe. To und-rstand clearly how this may be, let us imagine that a wall is raised at a particular place. Now, can we say that the *ākāśa* is divided by the wall, that one part of it lies on this side of the wall, and another on the other? Division into parts implies that particular areas of space must be occupied by particular parts of the divided substance. But the *ākāśa*, being all-pervading, pervades even through the dividing partition. The *ākāśa* on the one side of the wall is continuous with the *ākāśā* on the other. Now, let us suppose that the wall is suddenly pulled down. It is surely absurd to say that any bits of the destroyed wall have stuck to the *ākāśa* that pervaded the wall when it was intact In fact, the *ākāśa* is an all-pervading substance on account of its fineness and subtlety. Matter cannot taint it. In like manner, the *ātman*, though stationed in every body, is not tainted by the tendencies and dispositions of the body.

Opinions differ as to whether it is the Supreme Self or the individual soul that is referred to in this *śloka*. The position is, however, similar in both cases. The association of the finite

self with *prakriti* does not endow it with a material character, nor give it a share in the work which the body does and in the effects of *karma* which it creates for itself. For *karma* belongs to the body and not to the soul. Similarly, the close association of God with *prakṛiti* does not make Him subject to the weaknesses and limitations of *prakṛiti*. The *vikāras* and *guṇas* of the body do not belong to the soul, much less do they belong to what is divine in us. The function of the *ātman* is merely to spread the light of consciousness—a light which is but a spark from the radiant energy of God.

यथा प्रकाशयत्येकः कृत्स्नं लोकमिमं रविः ।
क्षेत्रं क्षेत्री तथा कृत्स्नं प्रकाशयति भारत ॥ ३३ ॥

33. As the one sun illumines the whole of this universe, O Arjuna, the *kshetrajña* lights up the whole *kshetra*.

Here again the expression, '*kshetrin*', for which in the translation I have substituted the more familiar word, '*kshetrajña*', lends itself to a double interpretation. It may mean the soul or God. The soul may be conceived as lighting up the field of its play, while God is the source from which even the soul derives its light. Ultimately, therefore, God may also be looked upon as illuminating the *kshetra*. According as we accept the one or the other of these interpretations, we have also to understand differently the expression, '*kṛitsnaṃ kshetram*', that occurs in the second line. Literally rendered, it means the entire *kshetra*. This may stand for either the whole body whose capacity to feel and act and know is due to the soul, or to the entire physical universe which is quickened and illumined by the energy of God. You, know, of course, what is precisely meant when the soul is spoken of as light. Light possesses the power of revealing itself as well as other things. The flame of a lamp, for instance, makes itself manifest and also all things near it. In like manner, our consciousness makes us aware of ourselves as well as of the vast universe around us. It is the soul within that makes the body capable of feeling and knowing. And thus it is the light of the *kshetra*.

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोरेवमन्तरं ज्ञानचक्षुषा ।
भूतप्रकृतिमोक्षं च ये विदुर्यान्ति ते परम् ॥ ३४ ॥

34. Those who know with the aid of the eye of wisdom the difference between the *kshetra* and the *kshetrajña* and also (the way of) release from the *prakṛiti* of beings—they reach the highest.

Once again, let us note that mere intellectual realisation is not meant here. We may know the distinction between the flesh and the spirit and yet not live the life which that knowledge imposes on us. Knowing the better and doing the worse, we will be merely achieving self-destruction. It is only when we order our lives to be in harmony with the knowledge we have gained, it is only then that we, being free from selfishness and sensuality, will qualify ourselves for the enduring salvation of soul-emancipation and God-attainment.

CHAPTER XIV

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It is well known to you that all the authoritative commentators on the *Gītā* have understood it to be capable of falling into three natural divisions dealing respectively with the nature of the soul, the nature of God, and the application to practical conduct of the truths regarding the soul and God. It may said that the last six chapters are mainly ethical, while the first two divisions deal with the double foundations of ethics. And just as the second chapter of the *Gītā*, which begins Śrī Kṛishṇa's teachings, gives us a practically complete outline of the theory in regard to the soul of man, and as the seventh chapter places before us in outline the entire theory in regard to the nature of God and His relations with the world, even so you must have made out that the thirteenth chapter, which we finished last week, tells us in brief how our conduct is to be guided by the truths that have been taught to us about the nature of the soul and of God.

It is a self-evident fact that we are all composite creatures. Man, as has been well said, is a compound of mud and sky. There is much in us that is of the earth earthy, but at the same

time there is something in us which makes us feel that we are all potentially divine and may raise ourselves to the level of God Himself. None can be free from this kind of complex composition. In consequence of this fact, man is ever the battle-field of conflicting and contrarious tendencies and impulses. And it becomes necessary to discriminate between the various calls that are made upon us for attention and action, to encourage some and discourage others. If our ideal is the emancipation of the soul and attainment of God, then we must encourage and foster those tendencies in us that appertain to what is spiritual and divine in us. And for this, it is essential to succeed in analysing our complex structure and in marking off what belongs to the flesh from what belongs to the soul and to God, who infills us and actuates us in all that we think and do.

Such an analysis is carried out for our benefit in the thirteenth chapter, which is declared to deal with the distinction between the body, which is material, and the soul, which, being immaterial, is within the body, enlivening and illumining it. It begins with an examination of the nature of the body and of the soul and then goes on to deal with the effects of the association of the body and the soul in the life of *samsāra*. Some of the thoughts and tendencies that take their rise out of the union of *purusha* and *prakṛiti* can lead us on to bliss and deliverance. These are designated as *jñāna* or knowledge for the reason that they can lead us on to the knowledge which saves, the knowledge, namely, of the true nature of the soul and God. It is, of course, to be borne in mind that we cannot seek God with our intellects alone. Our whole being must be pressed into service in the quest after God. And so a knowledge of God must inevitably transform our personalities. In what manner this transformation will be effected may be seen from the description of *jñāna* occurring in this chapter.

Then we are told that, if we do not lead this kind of life, we will be destroying ourselves through ourselves. Here, indeed, is the central theme of Hindu ethics. Some European critics of Indian thought have recognised the unique depth and strength of the foundation that Indian genius has been able to lay for ethical endeavour of all kinds. Do unto others as you would be done by—this is the golden rule of conduct accepted by all the great

religions of the world. But, as it has been well pointed out by Professor Deussen of Germany in one of the lectures he delivered in India, no religion other than Hinduism has explained the rationale of this rule: Why should I do unto others as I wish that they should do unto me? Why should I not make a distinction between myself and others? What is there to show that such a feeling is wrong? To such questions, it seems to me that the *Gītā* alone, as embodying the quintessence of Indian thought, supplies a satisfactory answer. We are taught that by leading a selfish life, we destroy ourselves through ourselves.

How this is so, I tried to explain to you when we were dealing with XIII. 28. When a man leads a life which is either sensual or selfish, he acts in a manner which shows that he has not recognised the truth about himself The man who encourages the tendencies of the flesh and yields to the promptings of selfishness, fails to recognise that he has a soul and that it may be led on to attain God Himself. Blind to these facts, he gives up the better for the enjoyment of the worse. Again, such a man also fails to realise the all-pervading character of God. As we all know, God is seated in the hearts of all. When this is the case, any one who feels that he is a superior person, from whom the world must consider it a privilege to receive ill-treatment and injury of all sorts—such a person very obviously refuses to recognise the divinity in himself and in others. So then, if we learn to discriminate between what is low and unworthy in us and what is spiritual and divine, we will easily see that a life of sensuality or selfishness ill becomes our true natue. By refusing to recognise the invaluable opportunities that life offers to us for the emancipation of our souls, we achieve only self-destruction. In other words, we can serve ourselves more readily by serving others than by getting ourselves served. In service is the salvation of man. Such seems to me the main teaching of this chapter.

The summary of this chapter in the *Gītārtha-saṅgraha* of Yāmunāchārya arrives at practically the same conclusion, though, perhaps, on slightly different grounds:

देहस्वरूपमात्माप्तिहेतुरात्मविशोधनम् ।
बन्धहेतुर्विवेकश्च त्रयोदश उदीर्यते ॥

"The essential characteristics of the body, the means for self-realisation, examination of the nature of the soul, the cause of bondage, discriminatory knowledge—all this is declared in the thirteenth chapter." The rule to live the life of service and *samatva* is here derived from the interpretation of the term, '*kshetrajña*', throughout this chapter as the individual soul.

Now, it has been pointed out to us that, by yielding to the tendencies and impulses of *prakṛiti*, we strengthen the bondage of our souls and that, by resisting these same impulses and tendencies, we pave the way for our freedom. Therefore it is only natural that Śrī Kṛishṇa should proceed to teach something more about the *guṇas* and *vikāras* of *prakṛiti* in the chapter that follows, which goes by the name of *guṇa-traya-vibhāga-yoga*. The three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, as you are aware, belong to *prakṛiti*. They do not characterise the soul, nor do they appertain to God. They have, however, both a physical and an ethical significance. Viewed physically, the *rajo-guṇa* represents universal energy in the process of evolution, while the *tamo-guṇa* is the same universal energy in the process of dissolution. The *sattva-guṇa* is conceived to be a state of balance between the processes of evolution and dissolution. Owing to the close connection which is believed to exist between a man's physical constitution and his moral character, these *guṇas* are also looked upon as indicating certain moral conditions. These are dealt with in some detail in the chapter that we have to study now. It is desirable for us to know what traits in us are due to the *sattva-guṇa*, what others are due to the *rajas* and the *tamas* in us, which of these are to be sought after and which avoided. Bound as we are by *prakṛiti*, we must know when our prison offers us ways of escape and when it is impregnable. In other words, we must learn when *prakṛiti* is most helpful and when it is least friendly. These points will become clear to us during the course of our study of the fourteenth chapter, whose first verse runs thus :

श्रीभगवानुवाच—

परं भूयः प्रवक्ष्यामि ज्ञानानां ज्ञानमुत्तमम् ।
यज्ज्ञात्वा मुनयस्सर्वे परां सिद्धिमितो गताः ॥ १ ॥

Śrī Kṛishṇa said:

I shall teach again that supreme knowledge, the best of (all kinds of) knowledge, having known which, all the great sages have passed from this (world) to the highest perfection.

Śrī Kṛishṇa here declares that the subject of His teaching in this chapter is of such supreme importance in the guidance of our lives that, by merely knowing it, we may be able to attain the supreme end of the pilgrimage of life. This supreme knowledge, as will be soon pointed out, deals with the distinction among the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* in their moral aspects. To know what aspects of our life and conduct are characterised by each of the three *guṇas* is to possess saving knowledge. If man is to progress morally so as to fit himself for winning the enduring salvation of soul-emancipation and God-attainment, it is surely essential for him to know how he has to guide himself in regard to the influence and operations of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. Such knowledge is of fundamental value in the practical guidance of life, and for that reason it has been designated the highest knowledge.

You are certainly aware that Śrī Kṛishṇa has always been stressing the importance of conduct. He has always been inclined to judge men more by their lives than by their convictions and beliefs. It is as though the *Gītā* teaches the view that one cannot be in the wrong whose life is in the right. The creeds that we subscribe to have less to do with our deliverance than the kind of life that we lead. This, of course, does not mean that there is no relation between the philosophy or religion that we believe in and the moral pattern of our lives. If Śrī Kṛishṇa had held such a view, He would not have taken the trouble to teach us the great truths of the thirteenth chapter. The ethics of the *Gītā* is broad-based on the real nature of three entities, which may roughly designate as matter, soul and God. It rests on the double foundation of self-realisation and God-realisation. Nevertheless, it is well for us to remember that whatever philosophical views one may hold on the ultimate metaphysical principles, one may attain salvation by leading the proper kind of life. The highest perfection may be won by conquering our tendencies towards selfishness and sensuality.

It is not meant to be conveyed that righteousness is unrelated to religion, but it is certainly suggested that righteousness in itself is more than religion. When we say that one cannot be in the wrong whose life is in the right, we do not put a premium on irreligion. The man who feels no promptings in himself higher than those of the flesh, cannot lead the righteous life. When conduct is taught to be more important than creeds for the attainment of the highest goal, it is held that to believe in a religion and not to practise it is worse than having no reasoned-out convictions on the fundamental problems of religion and philosophy, but leading the right kind of life. In short, the practice of religion is more than the profession of it; for the practice of religion is synonymous with the life of righteousness. It is for this reason that the knowledge relating to *guṇa-traya-vibhāga* is here spoken of as constituting the highest wisdom, judged from the standpoint of practical utility.

इदं ज्ञानमुपाश्रित्य मम साधर्म्यमागताः ।
सर्गेऽपि नोपजायन्ते प्रलये न व्यथन्ति च ॥ २ ॥

2. Those who, resorting to this knowledge, attain to the possession of qualities that characterise Me, are neither born at the time of creation, nor hurt at the time of dissolution.

Śrī Kṛishṇa here makes it perfectly clear that the knowledge relating to conduct, which is taught in this chapter, is capable of leading us by itself to the highest goal of all. If, knowing the different properties of the three *guṇas*, we lead a life which is righteous, perfectly pure and free from sensuality and selfishness, we will attain the enduring salvation of *moksha*. It is implied that it is enough to know how to guide our lives; it is not absolutely essential to understand the basis of ethics. Let me try to illustrate this point with a simile. You know that there are various patent medicines in the market. Take the case of a doctor who prescribes a patent pill to a certain patient without understanding the details of its composition. He knows merely the clinical results of prescribing the pill. Compare him with a physician who knows everything about the composition of the pill and the

therapeutic effects of its various component parts. The pill is as likely to cure a patient of the first doctor as of the second. It is, of course, always safer to place one's self in the hands of the doctor who knows everything that has to be known about the drugs he prescribes. But when one cannot have his services, one would naturally prefer to use an attested patent pill rather than be without treatment of any kind. In like manner we have to look at the question of conduct also.

In regard to our moral life, we are taught certain doctrines—that we must not be selfish, that we must not be sensual and so forth. Our *guru*, perhaps, may not be able to tell us why we must obey these commandments. He may simply say: "That is what I learnt from my *guru*." The potency of the pill is preserved. The practice of selflessness kills all moral disease, whether or not we know the how and why of it. From observing many cases in which a life free from selfishness and sensuality has led to progress towards perfection, and by the logic of induction, we draw the inference that such a life provides the cure for that sickness of the soul which has forced it to clothe itself in this vesture of clay. The point to be grasped is this. It is well to know the cause of the bondage of the soul and the rationale underlying the commandment to live the righteous life. But knowing this is of little value when compared with living it. One may be a saint unawares. One may attain perfection without being a philosopher. That is why knowledge concerning the way in which we must guide our lives is here declared to be supreme knowledge; for it can by itself secure us salvation. The ultimate state of perfection is attained by all those who know the different effects of the three *guṇas*; for it is said that they are above birth and death. Their souls are in the *muktāvasthā*, the state of complete freedom from the bondage of matter.

Some controversy has centred round the interpretation of the phrase, '*mama sādharmyaṃ āgatāḥ*'. We may translate it as "those who win for themselves the same characteristics as those which I possess". What is implied is a community of characteristics and qualities between God and those who achieve perfection. Now this may be taken to mean that, in the state of salvation, we either realise our identity with God or become

God-like in our freedom from the bondage of *karma*. Whichever of these interpretations is accepted, let me once again emphasise that Śrī Kṛishṇa is here anxious to impress on us that it is more important to know—and *live*—the way of salvation than to understand its metaphysical basis and philosophical justification.

मम योनिर्महद्ब्रह्म तस्मिन् गर्भं दधाम्यहम् ।
सम्भवस्सर्वभूतानां ततो भवति भारत ॥ ३ ॥

3. The great *mūla-prakṛiti* is a womb for Me; in it, I cast the seed. And from it, O Arjuna, is the birth of all beings.

Having pointed out the importance of a study of the nature of *prakṛiti*, Śrī Kṛishṇa begins His discourse on the distinctive characteristics of the three *guṇas* by stressing the subordination of *prakṛiti* to God. *Prakṛiti* is, as it were, an inert basis, which God endows with life. She is the womb which is impregnated with life and light by the Lord. Were it not for the vital gift of God, the universe would be dead and dumb and desolate. And that is why He is sometimes named Nārāyaṇa. The evolution of Nature is impelled and guided by God. All beings in the universe spring from the association of the *kshetra* with the *kshetrajña*, of matter with mind. These things are made clearer in the next stanza, where the analogy suggested by this verse is completed.

Many of you may have noted that I have translated the term, '*brahman*', which occurs in this *śloka*, as 'the great *mūla-prakṛiti*'. Though we have to understand '*brahman*' ordinarily to mean the Absolute of metaphysics, still the sense that we have given it in the translation is not unusual. We have come across such usage already once or twice in the course of our study of the *Gītā*. As you are well aware, the etymological significance of the word is anything which is big. The great big universe, the visible infinite, may be as readily and appropriately described by the word, '*brahman*', as that other invisible infinite, the Lord of measureless might. And this interpretation is supported by the weighty authority of the eminent teachers who have commented on the *Gītā*.

सर्वयोनिषु कौन्तेय मूर्तयस्संभवन्ति याः ।
तासां ब्रह्म महद्योनिरहं बीजप्रदः पिता ॥ ४ ॥

4. Whatever living forms spring up from all sorts of wombs, O Arjuna, their great womb (is) *prakṛiti*, and I (am their) seed-giving father.

Śrī Kṛishṇa here completes the metaphor which was merely suggested in the previous *śloka*. If the evolution of Nature is to be traced to a divine impulse, if all life and energy in the universe are derived from the power and consciousness of God, then surely it is wrong to look upon one's parents as the sole cause of one's existence. We are all composite entities, creatures of earth and heaven. The mother of all of us is *prakṛiti*, whose blood and flesh have given us this shape and form. But the light of our consciousness is due to our Father, whose brooding energy started and maintains the process of the universe. He stirred up the dead equilibrium of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, and brought into existence the wonderful variety of this universe.

The analogy here elaborated is, as you will agree, telling, clear and decisive. It sums up the *Vedāntic* doctrine of creation and defines the relations between *prakṛiti* and God. All Hindu thought and worship in temples and homes are based on this fundamental conception. One of the ways in which the association of our gods with divine consorts—of Vishṇu with Lakshmī, of Śiva with Pārvati—is sought to be justified philosophically is based on this idea. If Vishṇu is the omnipotent Lord, the Father of our being, then our divine mother, Lakshmī, is *prakṛiti*. We must not, of course, understand these similitudes literally. *Pṛakriti* is not really the wife of the *Brahman*. But certain characteristic relations between *prakṛiti* and the *Parama Purusha* resemble those between a husband and a wife. In the first place, it is well to note that the wife's position is conceived to be one of subordination to that of her husband. And so, too, the material *prakṛiti* stands in relation to the Lord. Then it is believed that, so far as creation is concerned, *prakṛiti* plays a passive and God an active role. The initiative comes from the *Parama Purusha*, and she is as clay in His hands.

After pointing out in general terms the exact position of *prakṛiti* in the scheme of things Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to deal with the *guṇas* and their effects. So, He begins his discourse thus:

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसंभवाः ।
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥ ५ ॥

5. *Sattva, rajas* and *tamas*—these 'qualities', born of *prakṛiti,* bind the indestructible soul in the body, O Arjuna.

The soul, as we have been taught, is immaterial, immutable and, therefore, immortal. The body, as we all know, is material, mutable and mortal. It is here declared that the immortal soul is bound in this mortal coil on account of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. The succeeding verses explain how the different *guṇas* fetter and bind the soul. It is to be noted that all the *guṇas* have a binding tendency. Even the desirable *sattva-guṇa* has this characteristic. In moral life, we have to progress from the *tāmasa* to the *rājasa* and thence to the *sāttvika* state. But our ultimate ideal must be to rise above all the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. Very soon, you will learn something about those who have transcended the binding influence of the three *guṇas* and who are described consequently as *guṇātītas*.

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयम् ।
सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ ॥ ६ ॥

6. Of these, the *sattva,* illumining and healthful on account of its purity, binds the soul, O Arjuna, with the bond of happiness and the bond of knowledge.

Every *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* binds the soul in a particular and characteristic manner. Here we are told that the *sattva-guṇa* fashions for the soul fetters of happiness and knowledge. *Sattva,* as you already know, has been characterised as *ishṭa* or desirable in a stanza from the *Sāṅkhya-Kārikas,* which I once quoted. It may, therefore, be asked how this desirable quality tends to bind the soul. The answer to this question is indicated in this *śloka.*

You must bear in mind that even a man acting under the influence of the *sattva-guṇa* is hardly free from the influence of *prakṛiti*; for *sattva* after all is a *guṇa* of *prakṛiti*. It is undoubtedly desirable; it gives us the light which may lead us on to deliverance. Nevertheless, even a man of predominantly *sāttvika* temperament may not escape the bondage of *karma*. If *tamas* is a dark blanket, screening us from the sight of God, and *rajas* makes a screen only somewhat less opaque, *sattva* may be compared to a translucent veil, half obscuring and half revealing the divinity beyond. Even so, it is still a veil. We are told here that the *sattva-guṇa* is healthful and illuminating and stainless. Because it is healthful, it gives rise to *sukha* or happiness, and on account of its radiant light, it gives rise to wisdom. *Sukha* and *jñāna* are undoubtedly desirable; but even they may build us a prison-house. Instead of utilising the light of wisdom to show us the way of release, we may fall in love with it and try to enjoy its lingering sweetness. Then inevitably deliverance is delayed.

Tho predominance of the *sattva-guṇa* in us may give us valuable experiences. But we must not get attached to these; otherwise there is no escape for us from the maze of *samsāra*. Even the love of God, which arises from the influence of *sattva*, has sometimes acted as a barrier against final release. Some *bhaktas* have actually declared: "We would rather go on living the life of *samsāra* than attain the salvation of *moksha*; for the former gives us opportunities to serve God and hymn His glories." Not that they think lightly of *moksha*. Only they prefer the *sukha* which they feel in their embodied condition by exercising their love of God, to the bliss of *moksha*. In this way, the *sattva-guṇa* may hold us in bondage, even while pointing out the way to freedom.

It is essential to note here that Śaṅkarāchārya explains in a different way the binding character of the *sattva-guṇa*. When any one feels happiness, he tends to think: "I am happy." This, according to *advaita*, is a wrong view; for it superimposes on the One Self of all an experience belonging to the world of *māyā*. In a similar way, the feeling that one is a knower is false. But when these wrong views are entertained, attachment is caused to knowledge and happiness. And that attachment sows the seeds of

karma. In this discussion, the terms, '*jñāna*' and '*sukha*', are not understood as the knowledge and bliss which is the very nature of the Self. As they say in Sanskrit, only *vṛitti-jñāna* and *vṛitti-sukha* are believed to be referred to here; not *svarūpa-jñāna* or *svarupānanda*.

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णासङ्गसमुद्भवम् ।
तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम् ॥ ७ ॥

7. Know, O Arjuna, *rajas* to be of the nature of desire and the source of covetousness and selfish attachment. It binds the soul by the bond of action.

Desire is the soul of *rajas*. Ambition and avarice, greed and selfish attachment, all take their rise from the influence of the *rajo-guṇa*. The predominance of *rajas* in any one very naturally makes for a life of restless activity and aggressive achievement. When in the grip of desire, we can have no peace until we satisfy it. And it is the nature of desire not to be satisfied by the enjoyment of the objects of desire. The covetous man will thus be led on to ceaseless activity, the stimulus of one desire replacing that of another in unending succession. In the end, of course, a life, busy and hectic after this fashion, may seem futile. But the point to be noted here is that the incessant stream of work directed to the attainment of selfish desires, which such a life gives rise to, inevitably creates for us the bondage of *karma*. It may be noted that the expression, '*tṛishṇāsaṅga*', occurring in the verse has been split by Śaṅkarāchārya into *tṛishṇā* and *asaṅga*; he glosses *tṛishṇā* as the longing after what one has not and *asaṅga* as the attachment to what one has.

तमस्त्वज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।
प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन्निबध्नाति भारत ॥ ८ ॥

8. Know *tamas* to arise from perverse ignorance and to cause delusion to all embodied souls. It binds, O Arjuna, by heedlessness, sloth and sleep.

When *tamas* is said to be born of *ajñāna* or ignorance, we may well understand that ignorance to be of a perverse kind; for

immediately afterwards, we are told that *tamas* deludes all. Not mere ignorance, but perverse obstinacy in mistaking what is not true for what is true, can alone delude. If, for instance, the truth of things indicates that sensuality tends to pull down the aspiring soul of man to a *tāmasa* temperament, it may well appear that sensual indulgence is the one thing to live for. In this way *tamas* deludes all. No one in the thrall of this dull and dark *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* can understand the true nature of things; for the light of his soul is clouded.

It is then stated that the three bonds which *tamas* creates for the soul are *pramāda*, *ālasya*, and *nidrā*. *Pramāda* is literally heedlessness; in this context it most probably stands for criminal negligence in matters of utmost moment. One who deals carelessly with the truths of religion and is inattentive in learning and doing one's duty may be, to use Berkeley's famous phrase, a thriving earthworm, but he hardly realises the dignity and responsibilities of his humanity. *Ālasya* is laziness. It may here refer to laziness of mind as well as of body. One who is always in a state of comatose stupidity and whom nothing can stimulate to thought or action—such a person is obviously of the *tāmasa* temperament. The third bond of *tamas* is sleep. It is not meant to be conveyed by this that sleep in itself is undesirable. You may remember that even the difficult discipline of *yoga* makes suitable provision for sleep; the *yogin* was described in VI. 17 as *yukta-svapnāvabodha*, one who has appropriate sleep and wakefulness. It is plain that only too much sleepiness is condemned here. Apart from the fact that a man, who sleeps away too much of his time, wastes recklessly the invaluable opportunities of life for progress, it is also to be borne in mind that too much sleep is apt to make the mind dull and incapable of steady and sustained exertion.

Before passing on to the next verse, I may mention that the term, '*ajñānajam*', which we have understood as meaning "born of ignorance", has also been interpreted as "giving rise to ignorance". Perverse ignorance leads on to *tamas*, because it encourages what is *tāmasa* in us. At the same time, one under the sway of *tamas* is bound to be ignorant; for this *guṇa* shrouds the soul in darkness. Either view fits in well with the context.

सत्त्वं सुखे सञ्जयति रजः कर्मणि भारत ।
ज्ञानमावृत्य तु तमः प्रमादे सञ्जयत्युत ॥ ९ ॥

9. The *sattva-guṇa* causes association with happiness, *rajas,* O Arjuna, with action. Screening off knowledge, *tamas* causes association with (perverse and criminal) heedlessness.

Here the contents of the last three verses are summed up. The *sattva-guṇa* binds one with the bond of happiness and knowledge. *Rajas* gives rise to a life of energetic activity and aggressive achievement. The life of ignorance and perverse lack of attention to one's duties and responsibilities is caused by *tamas.* Having followed the teachings Śrī Kṛishṇa so far, the enquirer may ask: How is this knowledge helpful to us in living the life that leads us to acquire community of characteristics with God Himself? The answer to this question is indicated in the succeeding verses.

रजस्तमश्चाभिभूय सत्त्वं भवति भारत ।
रजस्सत्त्वं तमश्चैव तमस्सत्त्वं रजस्तथा ॥ १० ॥

10. Subduing *rajas* and *tamas,* O Arjuna, *sattva* becomes (preponderant). And *tamas* (becomes preponderant, subduing) *rajas* and *sattva.* And likewise (subduing) *tamas* and *sattva, rajas* (becomes preponderant).

Since *prakṛiti* is characterised by the three *guṇas,* it follows that all the *guṇas* must be in association with every embodied soul. Each of them, however, binds the soul in a distinctive and characteristic manner. It is as though one *guṇa* shackled the soul with golden fetters, another with silver chains, and the third with iron handcuffs. Are all these various bonds simultaneously imposed on the soul? Can one be under the influence of both knowledge and ignorance, action and inaction at the same time? And as there is a scale of values for the three *guṇas,* is there any way by which one might seek for some progress in moral life? If we are to consider problems like these, we will have to know the interrelations among the *guṇas* themselves. Śrī Kṛishṇa, therefore, takes up this subject for discussion.

Even though all the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* are to be found in association with every embodied soul, He teaches that they do not stand in the same interrelations in all cases. Each *guṇa* dominates in certain particular conditions of *prakṛiti*. In the body of a great saint, for instance, *sattva* will be preponderant, while *tamas* will dominate the body of a vile sinner. All the three *guṇas* do exist in association with the sinner as well as the saint, but they stand in different relations to one another in the two cases. If a quantitative analogy is permitted, one may say that the proportions of the *guṇas* differ in diverse instances. Further light is thrown on the characteristics of the several states in which the various *guṇas* acquire dominance in the stanzas that follow, with a view ultimately to facilitate our progress from the lower to the higher states.

सर्वद्वारेषु देहेऽस्मिन्प्रकाश उपजायते ।
ज्ञानं यदा तदा विद्याद्विवृद्धं सत्त्वमित्युत ॥ ११ ॥

11. When wisdom arises, with all the gateways in this body streaming forth light, then it should be known that *sattva* has increased in power.

In this translation, I have followed the tradition which construes the word, '*prakāśa*', in the first line in the locative case ; thus a locative absolute construction is made out in the first line. The word may also be taken to be in the nominative case, when it must be regarded as being in apposition with the word, '*jnānam*', occurring in the second line. Hence the stanza may also be translated as: "When the light of knowledge streams forth from all the gateways of the body," etc. The general sense, however, is clear It is the nature of *sattva* to illumine and light up. When *sattva* is dominant, the intellect is clear and acquires knowledge of truth.

लोभः प्रवृत्तिरारंभः कर्मणामशमस्स्पृहा ।
रजस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे भरतर्षभ ॥ १२ ॥

12. Covetousness, activity, undertaking of actions, discontent, desire—these arise, O Arjuna, when *rajas* is dominant.

Covetousness may be looked upon as the very opposite of renunciation. Love of possession naturally leads on to a life of aggressive achievement. What is spoken of as work or activity here must be understood as the restless pursuit of desire. Such unceasing activity never satisfies; for, as we have been often taught, desire cannot be satisfied by the enjoyment of the objects of desire. It grows by what it feeds on. The life of energetic action brings only discontent in its wake and this in turn becomes the stimulus for fresh desires. Desire, efforts to satisfy desire, discontent, and desire again, these form a natural cycle of mental states. And it is worth observing that the characteristics of *rajas* given here are in the right psychological order.

अप्रकाशोऽप्रवृत्तिश्च प्रमादो मोह एव च ।
तमस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे कुरुनन्दन ॥ १३ ॥

13. Want of light, inactivity, heedlessness and delusion, these rise, O Arjuna, when *tamas* prevails.

Want of light means, of course, absence of knowledge, ignorance about the truth of things. This ignorance is of a perverse kind. It is not mere absence of knowledge, but the presence of false knowledge. Delusion here probably means perverse notions of things arising out of lack of attention to the fundamental problems of life and conduct. *Apravṛitti* may indicate something not far different from *ālasya*. It must be carefully distinguished, of course, from *nivṛitti*. The life of a saint is a life of *nivṛitti*. Within certain limits and judged externally, the life of the saint may not seem dissimilar to a life of indolence. But this vital distinction remains. A saint has the power to live the life of active achievement; only he does not choose to do so. But the man under the deadening sway of *tamas* is simply incapable of work. Slothful and dull, he shirks work and can never be a centre of light and life.

Please allow me to stop here.

lxii

In our last class, we were dealing with the ways in which the dominance of each *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* in the moral constitution of

individuals could be made out. The characteristics of the states of dominance by the different *guṇas* that were mentioned are all of a moral character. Although *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, which is ultimately *jaḍa*, still, in Indian thought, these names stand for distinctive moral attributes. The *sattva-guṇa*, for instance, indicates not merely a certain characteristic of the physical body of man, but also some aspects of his moral nature. This presupposes a very close relationship between the physical constitution of man and his moral temperament. It is a view which, perhaps, may not be readily subscribed to by all; nevertheless it is coming more and more into the field of ascertained truth.

Why this should be the case is an entirely different question. The existence of close correspondence between physical characteristics, on the one hand, and mental and moral qualities on the other, has been observed in various ways by students of the philosophy of conduct all over the world. Even now thoughtful men are investigating the cause for the different tendencies and dispositions of different men. Why some men are saintly and others inclined towards crimes is a problem of perennial interest, on which the last word of science and philosophy is yet to be said. Some are of opinion that the characters of men may be explained fully by the various environmental influences to which they have been subjected. Others think that the quality of the education imparted determines, to a large extent, our intellectual and moral dispositions. Yet others believe that the answer to this question must be sought in the potent influence of heredity. It is true, of course, that the circumstances of our upbringing have a great deal to do with the shaping of our conduct. Nor can we deny the decisive influence of education on our life and character. None the less, if we carefully examine this question, we will find that environment and education do not go to the root of the matter. They act on and modify within very definite limits the inborn endowment of man, but they cannot work a 'sea-change' in it. It is invariably found that, if the temperament of an individual points in a particular direction, it somehow or other manages to subordinate the circumstances of the surrounding environment and the influence of education to its dominating tendency.

Two factors may be easily seen to be responsible for our mental and moral qualities. There is, firstly, what they speak of as the natural endowment of the individual, that is to say, the potentialities with which he has entered on the scene of life. Secondly, we have the environment in which he has been brought up and the education to which he has been subjected. If we believe in the doctrine of *karma*—as an unprejudiced examination of the facts at our disposal induces us to believe—then it must be clear that the external factor, comprising the influence of environment and education, can only be of secondary importance. What dominates the situation is the inner potentiality of man. And this, in turn, is largely determined by heredity. The sudden blossoming of genius in a family for long in a state of deserved obscurity cannot, of course, be explained by heredity. But as regards the large majority of mankind, the statement is true that they are as their fathers were. If this is understood as true in the sense of actually ascertained truth, then it will not be difficult to see why the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* are also given a moral significance. Particular physical characteristics are found to correspond to particular moral qualities. I may mention in this connection that even the medical profession recognises the existence of such a thing as temperament in individuals.

Understanding the *guṇas* to represent aspects of moral character, we have to proceed further today in the study of their influence on the final destiny of the soul. We have been taught the distinctive marks by which the preponderance of each of the three *guṇas* may be recognised. Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to tell us what this preponderance leads to.

यदा सत्त्वे प्रवृद्धे तु प्रलयं याति देहभृत् ।
तदोत्तमविदां लोकानमलान् प्रतिपद्यते ॥ १४ ॥

14. However, if the embodied soul meets with dissolution when *sattva* is dominant, then it attains the pure worlds of those who know the Highest.

The next two *ślokas* deal with the fate of the soul, which encounters death, when *rajas* and *tamas* are dominating the situation. And in regard to what is taught in all these three

ślokas, it is essential to know whether the *pravṛiddhi* of the *guṇas* referred to is in respect of a particular embodiment of the soul, or whether it has to be understood in relation to the various conditions of embodied existence the soul has gone through in the past and may yet go through in the future. What I mean is this. All the three *guṇas* are present in every individual. Though in the case of each individual there is one dominant *guṇa*, no individual is entirely influenced by one *guṇa* and one only. Even the saint under the wholesome sway of *sattva* has to feel at times the promptings of *rajas* and *tamas*. Likewise, the criminal in the grip of *tamas* is not completely denied the experience of the two nobler qualities. That is, no man is the same at all times. The saintly and the noble have their dark moments of temptation, even as the base and the vicious have their lucid intervals.

Now, every one dies when he is under the sway of some particular *guṇa* or other. This need not necessarily be the same *guṇa*, which dominates his life as a whole. A saint may die in a moment of moral weakness, just as a sinner may pass away at a time when he is seeing light fitfully and vaguely. The question that we have to answer is this : Do these *ślokas* refer to conditions such as these? Is the chance dominance of particular *guṇas* at the time of death so important that no attention need be paid to the life that went before? I have had occasion to show you that even death-bed repentance is not entirely devoid of value (Vol. II, pp. 131-3), but it does seem unreasonable to hold that the accidental prevalence of a particular *guṇa* at the last moments of life should affect the future destiny of the soul, to the exclusion of a whole life of character and conduct. In a way such a view undermines the whole doctrine of *karma*, for it denies any value to the result of a man's character and conduct throughout his life, while stressing unduly his attitude and outlook at the time of departure from life. Of course, we have already been taught that the feelings and thoughts of a man, when he is about to pass into the Great Beyond, do affect his future. The *samskāra* on the soul at the moment of death, as we have seen, is deeper and more profound than the *samskāra* at any other time whatsoever.

The *samskāra* produced by the exercise of thought and will in relation to our lives is under the influence of what might be spoken

of as the spirit and the flesh in us. It is governed, on the one hand, by the physical nature of man and, on the other, by the promptings of his soul. Where the one is strong, the other will be weak. There is a settled period in life, when both the physical and psychic powers of man are in a process of gradual growth and development. Then comes a time—the heyday of giddy youth—when the flesh grows strong and asserts itself against the spirit. Thereafter, in the declining years of life, our physical powers wane and the tendencies of the soul have a chance to come into their own. When the crisis of death is imminent, the power of the body is at its lowest ebb and the soul is peculiarly susceptible to impressions of all kinds. Hence the *samskāra* produced at the moment of death is exceedingly potent in determining the fate of the soul. And thus, even the accidental prevalence of the *vṛiddhi* of a particular *guṇa* at the time of death is bound to be of value.

But I believe something more is meant here. We may be reasonably sure that a man whose life is predominantly *sāttvika*, for instance, will be under the influence of that *guṇa* at the last moments of his life. And it is, as a result of rigid discipline extending possibly over a series of embodiments, that one can attain the blessed condition, wherein one is dominated by the most desirable of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. Similarly, a life of selfish immorality is likely to prevent the sway of *sattva* at the crisis of death. So the quality of one's life from birth to death is certainly not to be disregarded in judging the subsequent fate of the soul. And we may even go to the extent of saying that, in the vast majority of cases, the dominance of a particular *guṇa* at the time of death is brought about by the kind of life which one has lived, and that a man predominantly under the influence of *sattva*, for instance, over a long period of his life, will also most probably die under the same influence.

रजसि प्रलयं गत्वा कर्मसङ्गिषु जायते ।
तथा प्रलीनस्तमसि मूढयोनिषु जायते ॥ १५ ॥

15. Meeting with death during (the sway of) *rajas*, one is born among those attached to work. Likewise, dying during (the dominance of) *tamas*, one is born in the wombs of the dull.

The term, '*karma*', in this *śloka* stands for work and achievement. Those who are under the influence of *rajas* lead a life of ceaseless work and aggressive achievement. They are, thus, *karma-saṅgins*. And naturally, one who meets with death when the 'quality' of *rajas* is potent, is bound to be reborn in a body, predominantly *rājasa* in character. In other words, he will be born of parents who are under the sway of *rajo-guṇa* and who will thus condition the quality of their offspring. Similarly, those, dying under the influence of *tamas*, will be born of *tāmasa* parents and be, therefore, endowed with powerful tendencies in favour of the worst of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*.

It may asked at this stage: if the quality of one's past life determines that of the present, how is deliverance to come? A man, whose life is *rājasa* now, will most probably die under the influence of that *guṇa* and in consequence, he will be reborn of *rājasa* parents and inherit *rājasa* tendencies. Similar is the case with one dying under the influence of *tamas*. It is apparently an unending cycle, a prison from which there is no escape. How is one, under the influence of *rajas* or *tamas*, to see that one's next life is not under the influence of the same *guṇa*? In other words, can one rise above the power of heredity? The answer to this question must be sought in the fact that the character and conduct of man are moulded not merely by his inborn endowment, but also by the education he receives and the opportunities he meets with in life. The *Gītā* itself answers the specific question that we have raised here and it is enough if we try to understand what is taught.

कर्मणस्सुकृतस्याहुस्सात्त्विकं निर्मलं फलम् ।
रजसस्तु फलं दुःखमज्ञानं तमसः फलम् ॥ १६ ॥

16. They say that the fruit of action, which is good in itself, is stainless and *sāttvika*; (while) the fruit of *rajas* is pain and the fruit of *tamas* is ignorance.

It may be noted that I have translated the phrase, '*sukṛita-karma*', occurring in this verse, as 'action which is good in itself'. *Sukṛita-karma* is *karma* which gives rise to *puṇya*, even as *dushkṛita-karma* is *karma* that produces *pāpa*. Both *puṇya*

and *pāpa* are bonds of attachment, imprisoning the soul within the body. The distinction between the two, however, must be carefully noted. *Puṇya* accrues from doing good with selfish attachment, while *pāpa* springs from doing evil, of course, out of selfishness. A man who is generous and charitable may be motivated by love of fame. The work that he does is good in itself. What one bestows in charity is not the less valuable to the sufferer, because desire for honour impels the act of charity. But from the point of view of the good of one's own soul, charity bestowed out of motives of fame or honour is distinctly inferior to charity done as disinterested duty. It is only work which is good in itself and which is performed without any selfish motives, that produces neither *pāpa* nor *puṇya*. Thus work may be judged both from the standpoint of motives and in itself. It seems to me that what is referred to as *sukṛita-karma* is work which is good in itself. The performance of a deed which is good in itself gives rise to a *sāttvika* fruit, whatever the motive behind the deed.

It is the tendency of *rajas* to produce restlessness and acute discontent. Spurred on to ceaseless activity in the pursuit of one desire after another, a *rājasa* life is aimlessly busy. For the nature of desire being what it is, one can never attain satisfaction in hunting after it. A mind at rest and at peace with itself is, I believe, the greatest blessing that one can ever have. The gnawing dissatisfaction that lurks in the hearts of all who chase the will-o'-the-wisp of desire is acutely painful. It is thus that *rajas* leads on to *duḥkha*. Peace of mind and tranquillity of heart are far more valuable than wealth or fame or the satisfaction of any worldly desire whatsoever. This, however, does not imply that we must all lead lives of passive inactivity. We are, indeed, bidden to work and achieve, but at the same time to see that the balance of our moral nature is maintained and that our hearts are not oppressed by unfulfilled desires and disturbing covetousness. The fruit of *tamas* is ignorance; for dulness and want of intelligence can never give rise to knowledge of any kind, much less the knowledge which saves the soul from the trammels of the flesh.

सत्त्वात्सञ्जायते ज्ञानं रजसो लोभ एव च ।
प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च ॥ १७ ॥

17. From *sattva* knowledge is born, and from *rajas* covetousness. Heedlessness and delusion spring from *tamas*, as also ignorance.

If we study this *śloka* along with the verses that have preceded it, we will find the answer to the question which I raised sometime back—whether those who are under the sway of *tamas* or *rajas* must for ever continue to be so. Let us bear in mind some of the fundamental facts about the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* in their moral aspects. In the first place, all of us are influenced by all the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. There is none, of whom it can be said that he or she is under the sole influence of *sattva* or *rajas* or *tamas*. Nevertheless, there remain deep differences among us all. And this is due to the fact that the power and efficacy of the several *guṇas* vary in different cases. In one, *sattva* is more powerful than *rajas* and *tamas*; in another, *rajas* dominates *sattva* and *tamas*; and in a third, *tamas* prevails over the other two. Thirdly, in the life of every individual, there is scope for the play of all the three *guṇas*, in spite of the preponderance of any particular *guṇa*.

When we take these facts into consideration, it is possible to see the way of deliverance. The knowledge relating to the three *guṇas* is no dismal science; it does not teach a deadly fatalism. The policy of *laissez-faire* is unthinkable in the field of morals. Even though we owe to heritage—and ultimately to our own past *karma*—our innate tendencies and dispositions, that is to say, even though the dominance of a particular *guṇa* in us is determined by heredity, there is no reason why we should for ever continue to be under the sway of the same *guṇa*. We may rise above or fall beneath our inherited endowment. Even the man of the most favourable heritage experiences moments of trial and temptation, beckoning him on to the primrose path to perdition. If he succumbs to these, he loses the privilege of his birth, the advantages with which he has been born. In like manner, there are moments of illumination lighting up the darkness of the life of even the worst criminals. Some of them may be so attracted by

these moments of glowing inspiration as to transform their lives. Here, again, the influence of heredity is overpowered. The saint who succumbs to temptation falls below his heritage, while the criminal who reforms rises above it. Generally, we may say, heredity determines the moral outlines of one's character. It does not deprive us of the power of modifying it within limits. One may improve on it, or fail to utilise the advantages that it confers. Instances are not wanting of men of low heritage scaling the heights of saintly distinction and of men of noble birth falling into the mire of vicious degradation.

The burden of our past, acting through the instrument of heredity, endows us with certain dominant traits and tendencies. It is, however, left to us to use these as we may. A mere outline is presented to us; it is our privilege to fill in the picture. We may put in the lineaments of vice or the features of virtue. If we take advantage of the *sāttvika* impulses in our life, we will increase the beauty of the picture we are drawing. If, on the other hand, we yield to either *rajas* or *tamas*, the picture will develop unlovely traits and may end as a masterpiece of ugliness. We have the power to make or mar the beauty of our lives. Heritage cannot be ignored. In the race of life, we do not all start alike. Some of us are fleet of foot, others walk with leaden pace. But our way is bestrewn with opportunities innumerable—opportunities for betterment as well as for degradation. We may use the experience of life so as to make the best or the worst of our inherited endowments.

ऊर्ध्वं गच्छन्ति सत्त्वस्था मध्ये तिष्ठन्ति राजसाः ।
जघन्यगुणवृत्तिस्था अधो गच्छन्ति तामसाः ॥ १८ ॥

18. Those who adhere to *sattva* go up; those characterised by *rajas* remain in the middle; and those characterised by *tamas* go down, adhering to the ways (of life) that spring from the worst (moral) qualities.

Here is the secret of deliverance. The three *guṇas* act and react upon us, but it is in our power to elect whose influence to resist and whose to encourage. Adhering to the ways of *sattva*, we progress. Yielding to the power of *rajas*, we are caught in a

monotonous orbit—an apparently endless cycle of desire leading on to action and action giving rise to fresh desire. Succumbing to the promptings of *tamas*, we pass from one degradation to another till our ruin is complete. Though our life is dominated by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, the will is always free to make a choice among the various influences that seek to bring us under their sway. By placing ourselves more and more under the wholesome influence of *sattva*, that is to say, by trying to manifest in our lives those qualities which are called *sāttvika*, we may advance along the path to perfection and final release.

The progress and retrogression that are spoken of in this verse may be understood in two ways. There is, firstly, progress in relation to the life that one is leading at present. We may die better men than we were born. A single act of noble self-sacrifice may confer a halo of splendour on the whole of one's life and redeem years mis-spent in vice and wickedness. The discipline of will may transform a character even within the definite limits set up by the inherited endowment of dominant traits and tendencies. The *samskāra* of experience may correct or hold in check those tendencies to thought and action that are born with us. In a similar manner, an act of vice may stain indelibly an otherwise honourable life. We see often the heart-rending tragedy of wasted gifts, of false steps taken by men and women that have brought woe upon them and deprived them and the world of the use of their talents, of blight falling upon promising careers and giving us only the shadows of what might have been. One may, indeed, die worse than one is born; indeed it is far easier to fall below than to rise above our heritage.

Then there is progress and retrogression in relation to a series of embodiments. One may be born a better or a worse man in one's next birth. One who is slightly under the sway of *sattva* may be reborn in a body much more amenable to the healthful influence of the most desirable of the *guṇas*. Step by step, in this manner, one may advance till one is almost completely under the influence of *sattva* and then, indeed, transcend all the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* and pass on to perfection. On the other hand, by abuse of the legacy of our past *karma*, by misdirecting our energies and talents, we may descend to lower and lower depths in birth after birth, till our souls are shrouded in darkness so intense that the

light of wisdom can rarely penetrate it. We may thus either improve or worsen the heritage that comes to us at our next birth.

We may thus understand the progress and the degradation mentioned here in two ways. It may be either in relation to one's present life or in relation to a series of embodiments. One of these, indeed, opens the way to the other. By achieving moral progress within the limits set up by one's inherited endowment, one paves the way for a better endowment at one's next birth. The great power for good or ill that the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* wield is thus made clear. By exercising a proper choice amongst the various material influences that assail us, we may gradually gain for our souls the freedom and the bliss that they have lost. Nothing, indeed, is more certain than this, that though we are born with a definite mental and moral equipment, we can yet make the best possible use of them, and thus we may excel the promise of our birth and acquire in our next life a better and nobler equipment to aid us in our struggle for spiritual emancipation.

नान्यं गुणेभ्यः कर्तारं यदा द्रष्टानुपश्यति ।
गुणेभ्यश्च परं वेत्ति मद्भावो सोऽधिगच्छति ॥ १९ ॥

19. When the man of true vision knows no agent other than the *guṇas* and knows what is above the *guṇas*, then he attains to My state.

Just try to imagine for a moment what the life of the soul would have been, if it had not been in association with a material embodiment. Would it have then indulged in work of any kind, *sāttvika*, *rājasa* or *tāmasa*? Clearly, no. This life of work is the life of the embodied soul. The need for work arises only in the life of *saṁsāra*. The agency in regard to our deeds belongs more to *prakṛiti* than to the soul. In consequence of the realisation of this fact, we must logically give up the feelings of *i-ness* and *mine-ness* that play so large a part in the efforts of our life. The soul is not entitled to own the results of anything that the body has done. If the soul claims for itself the results of our deeds, it would be as though one man put in a claim for the fruits of another's work.

In taking up this position, however, we must guard ourselves against two possible errors. In the first place, nothing that has been said above must be understood as denying moral responsibility to the soul. It has merely been taught that the work that we do in the world of *samsāra* is impelled as well as executed by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. The capacity for potential work, for being the substratum of effort, resides in the soul, and determines its inescapable moral responsibility. Secondly, the attribution of the agency of our deeds to *prakṛiti* does not make Śrī Kṛishṇa's teaching materialistic. For, as He is careful to point out immediately, He teaches also that there is something beyond and above the *guṇas*—the soul or God. We know that, beyond and above the *prakṛiti* which constitutes our embodiment, we have our consciousness, our power to feel and our insight into the truth of things. That is, there is a spiritual entity in us which is responsible for our awareness of the self as well as of our consciousness of the external world. We know also that in the whole universe, brought into existence and maintained by the play of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, there is a Supreme Spirit, giving it energy and life, and directing the course of its evolution towards a predetermined end. The expression, '*guṇebhyaḥ param*', in this *śloka* may, therefore, be understood as referring either to the finite self or to God; in fact, both these interpretations are known to have been made by authoritative commentators.

It is those who realise that the agency of all our deeds belongs to *prakṛiti*, while believing in a soul and a God transcending the three *guṇas*—such men of vision alone attain to His state. They become God Himself or like unto Him. For the truths that they have realised lead them on to a course of conduct that frees them from the bondage of *karma* and confers on them the enduring salvation of *moksha*. What, indeed, that course of conduct is, will be taught in the verses that follow. But before beginning that topic, Śrī Kṛishṇa explains further the characteristics of the goal which is attained by those who are blessed with the vision described above.

गुणानेतानतीत्य त्रीन् देही देहसमुद्भवान् ।
जन्ममृत्युजरादुःखैर्विमुक्तोऽमृतमश्नुते ॥ २० ॥

20. The embodied (soul), transcending these three *guṇas* born out of the material embodiment, enjoys immortality, freed from birth, death, senility and sorrow.

The association of the soul with the body imposes on it the pleasures and pains of the experiences of the body. In a figurative way, we may speak of the embodied soul as being born, growing and dying. Birth and death here refer merely to material conditions of existence, and the interval from birth to death is a series of mutations. The soul, which is essentially immortal and immaterial, has no part in these changes; in particular, it must not feel the pain which accompanies the process of life. But in order that it may realise this fact, it must free itself from the influence of the three *guṇas*, emanating from its material embodiment. This can be done only in the manner suggested in *śloka* 18; that is, by making ourselves more and more amenable to the influence of *sattva* and less and less subject to *rajas* and *tamas*, as a preliminary step towards rising above all the *guṇas*. It is only by gradual progress won in life after life that we can attain a stage when death will bring us into the worlds of those who know the Highest. The severance of the painful association of the body with the soul must for ever be our object. By full use of the opportunities that meet us here and hereafter, we may attain the goal of immortality, if not at the conclusion of this life, at least after a few more incarnations.

Please allow me to conclude here our work for to-day.

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We have been taught so far many important facts about the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. We have learnt that they all tend to bind the soul and that each of them does it in its own characteristic fashion. The way of release has also been shown to us. From the prison of *prakṛiti*, we can win our freedom only by taking advantage of the conditions characteristic of it. It is really a wonderful arrangement that we have to take note of. Our ideal must be to release the soul from the bondage of matter. But it can be attained, not by refusing to have anything to do with matter, but by utilising it in the right manner. The body must be directed to serve the ends of the soul. That is the one and only way of liberation.

We have already seen how the path of freedom may be pursued. In the first place, we must realise that most of our work in this world is impelled and executed by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. The soul is not really the agent of our deeds. From this it follows that we must give up our feelings of *i-ness* and *mine-ness*. It may not be easy all at once to put this precept into practice. We may, however, develop the power of our will to rise above the impulses of *prakṛiti* by making the right choice among the various *guṇas* that tend to influence us. The *sattva* is the most desirable amongst the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, and by placing ourselves under its sway, we will progress in the practice of virtue and gain the power to rise above the *guṇas* altogether. When we rise above the *guṇas* born out of the *prakṛiti* of the body, then we cure ourselves of the disease of birth, death and old age.

It may be observed that the logic so far has been perfectly coherent. If the *guṇas* are the responsible agents of our activities, then the soul has nothing to do with them. It has no right to claim anything that we win or achieve in life. All tendencies in favour of selfishness seem meaningless. We must order our lives in a manner which gives no scope for the play of selfishness or sensuality. Such is the inevitable inference that we have to draw from the facts that have been taught. But the question may be raised : Is this kind of life possible ? Has it ever been lived at all, or is it merely a metaphysical dream ? Example, after all, teaches better than precept ; can we see any one leading this kind of selfless life ? At this stage of his enlightenment, Arjuna has no doubts about the truth or reasonableness of Śri Kṛishṇa's teaching. But he is anxious as a weak man to know whether this ideal course of conduct has ever been pursued and whether he can discover one pursuing it day by day and hour by hour. So he asks :

अर्जुन उवाच—

कैर्लिङ्गैस्त्रीन्गुणानेतानतीतो भवति प्रभो ।
किमाचारः कथं चैतांस्त्रीन् गुणानतिवर्तते ॥ २१ ॥

ARJUNA SAID :

21. By what marks, O Lord, does one, who has risen above these three *guṇas*, become (characterised) ? What is (his) manner of life ? And how does (he) transcend these three *guṇas* ?

Arjuna desires to know the practical means by which it is possible to rise above the influence of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* in our daily life. If a select few are leading such a life, how are we to know it? What are the observable characteristics from which we can infer their state of perfection and distinguish them from the common run of humanity? That is the first question. Arjuna then goes on to ask what manner of life is led by them. This is not far different from the question that has gone before. We may in fact look upon these two questions as one relating to the way of life of the *guṇātīta*. When we have learnt to distinguish those who have risen above the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* from those who are still under their sway, we will feel curious about the methods by which the *guṇas* have been subdued. That is why Arjuna asks as his third and last question: What is the means that one has to adopt to become a *guṇatīta*?

श्रीभगवानुवाच—

प्रकाशं च प्रवृत्तिं च मोहमेव च पाण्डव ।
न द्वेष्टि संप्रवृत्तानि न निवृत्तानि काङ्क्षति ॥ २२ ॥

ŚRĪ KṚISHṆA SAID:

22. Illumination, activity, and even delusion, O Arjuna, (he) hates not, when present, nor longs after, when absent.

We have seen that *prākāśa* or illumination is the mark of the *sattva-guṇa*, that *pravṛitti* or aggressive activity characterises *rajas*, and that *moha* or delusion is the distinguishing attribute of the *tamo-guṇa*. Now, whether we are saints or sinners, all the three *guṇas* act upon us. In different persons and at different times, different *guṇas* dominate. At one time, *sattva* may be predominant; at another, *rajas* or *tamas* may prevail. When a particular *guṇa* is dominant, its characteristic quality is *sampravṛitta* in relation to us. When *sattva* is supreme, the light of wisdom keeps us company, and both selfish activity and delusion are far from us. That is, when the distinguishing property of one of the *guṇas* is in the ascendant, the characteristics of the other two *guṇas* are more or less absent. Now, in the course of our lives, there may be changes in the strength

of the different *guṇas* in relation to us from time to time. So long as we have not risen to the height of the *guṇātīta*, it is only natural to feel particularly pleased or displeased with the *pravṛitti* of some *guṇas* and the *nivṛitti* of the rest. It is only those who have transcended the three *guṇas*, that will neither hate the influence of the three *guṇas*, when present, nor long for them, when absent.

Let us pay a little more attention to this question. What is exactly meant by the statement that the *guṇātīta* neither hates nor loves the influence of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*? So long as our souls are clothed in flesh, so long we cannot hope to cut ourselves completely asunder from some kind of association with *prakṛiti*. Both the saint and the sinner are spirits dwelling in bodies. The saint is not an emancipated soul any more than the sinner is an embodiment of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* alone. They differ from each other in the degrees in which the spirit and the flesh manifest their power in relation to them. And as we have seen, moral progress is synonymous with submission to the influence of the *sattva-guṇa* in preference to the other two *guṇas*. But a stage is reached at last, when through the spiritual illumination afforded by the dominance of *sattva*, it is possible to live a life in which the spirit views with deliberate unconcern the adventures of the body in the world of *saṃsāra*. There is no longing even after the *sukha* and *jñāna* that are the gifts of *sattva*. But a devotee who is altogether lost in his devotion to God, feels that he would rather continue an embodied soul than realise the emancipation of *moksha*. In this way, attachment to the wisdom and the happiness, the sweetness and the light, of *sattva* may at times act as a hindrance to our release.

Take the life of a man who is practising the life of perfection with a view to become ultimately a *guṇātīta*. It is clearly essential in his case that he should be under the dominant sway of *sattva*. But he looks upon this only as a means towards a further end. He practises non-attachment even towards the *sukha* and *jñāna* that come in the wake of *sattva*. After a time, indeed, he may possess these as a matter of course. And there is no need to pine after what is already in your possession. It is, however, well to note that even one, well set on the road to perfection, may occasionally experience the effects of the other two *guṇas*. In a

state of physiological ill-health, for instance, the intellect may be clouded and the darkening effect of *tamas* felt. But he will not degrade his soul by desiring a different kind of material influence; he will try as far as possible to dissociate his soul from all kinds of material influence whatever. His conduct will be guided by his conviction that the life of *samsāra* is largely a life of the body. The effects of the *guṇas* are like the clouds that pass between us and the sun. The internal illumination of the *siddha* is like the brilliant light of the sun. The clouds cannot dim the intrinsic lustre of the sun; and even to us on earth they act only as a temporary screen of the luminary beyond. It is only those who lack discernment, men whose vision is obscured by the passing clouds, that will wonder how a man who is engaged in active work or, indeed, is manifesting the effect of any of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, can ever be a *siddha*.

Further details of the life of the *guṇātīta* are given below.

उदासीनवदासीनो गुणैर्यो न विचाल्यते ।
गुणा वर्तन्त इत्येव योऽवतिष्ठति नेङ्गते ॥ २३ ॥

23. He (is said to have transcended the *guṇas*), who remains like one indifferent, who is not moved by the *guṇas*, who stands firm and does not act (thinking) that the *guṇas* work themselves out.

The soul of the *siddha* is seated within his embodiment, like one altogether indifferent to the activities of the *prakṛiti* of his body. Being indifferent, that soul is not agitated in any way either favourably or unfavourably by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. It knows that work in this world is done by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* and refuses to identify itself therewith. In other words, the *guṇātīta* differs from other men only in his serene detachment from the life of *samsāra*. He does not lead an unnatural or incomplete life. The *guṇas* act in his life as in that of others, but he sees to it that there is no attachment between his soul and the results of his embodied life. Light and shade, pleasure and pain, these mark the course of our life. From time to time, they come and go, but the soul must remain unshaken,

unmoved either pleasantly or unpleasantly in relation to the natural occurrences of life.

समदुःखसुखस्स्वस्थस्समलोष्टाश्मकांचनः ।
तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥ २४ ॥

24. He (is said to have transcended the *guṇas*) who is the same in pain and pleasure, who remains in his self, to whom a clod of earth, a stone and gold are the same, who regards alike what is pleasant and what is unpleasant, who is of strong, unconquerable will, who is equally disposed towards praise and blame.

The *guṇātīta* regards equally pleasure and pain; he neither welcomes the one nor hates the other. As we have seen, pleasure and pain form a necessary part of our experience; they colour in fact all experience. But it is part of wisdom to refuse to become a slave to them. Our ideal in life must be something higher than the mere pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. To guide our life by our likes and dislikes is to court ruin. As we know, the pleasures and pains which an embodied being feels are not essentially and enduringly related to the soul, but they are mostly due to the transient and accidental contacts of the soul with its material embodiment. If our souls are to attain freedom, it is essential that we learn the art of greeting with equanimity the pleasures and the pains which the natural course of our lives gives rise to. Our aspirations and activities must centre round the soul. That is why the *guṇātīta* is described as *svastha*, one who is established in himself. This does not, of course, mean that he is self-centred. When the soul realises its true function and concerns itself with the activities proper to itself, it will refuse to be affected by the forces of *prakṛiti*. By the description of the *guṇātīta* as *svastha*, it is meant to be conveyed that he has realised the true nature and function of his soul.

If the soul is the pearl of great price, the things of the world lose their value and significance. Gems and gold, clods and stones, all are the same. All, indeed, is vanity and vexation of spirit. There is no reason why one who has understood the supreme importance of the destiny of the soul, should have any

attachment to the objects of ths senses or be actuated by a greed for gold, which alone can buy all the good things of this world. Likewise, such a person will feel equally disposed in regard to what is pleasant and what is unpleasant and will neither welcome flattery nor resent censure. He will follow the course of conduct that the interests of his soul require, undeterred by pain or pleasure, praise or blame. The mastery of his will over his senses is complete. He is a *dhīra* and is fully endowed with the heroism of the spirit.

मानावमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।
सर्वारंभपरित्यागी गुणातीतस्स उच्यते ॥ २५ ॥

25. He is said to have transcended the *guṇas,* who is the same in honour and dishonour, and equally disposed towards his friends and his foes, and who has given up all (selfish) endeavour.

Honour and dishonour arise from the opinions entertained by society. And it cannot be denied that moral progress is often due to the desire to achieve honour and spurn dishonour. When the *guṇātīta* is described as one who is the same in honour and dishonour, we must not understand that his attitude is in any way similar to that of the hardened sinner who recks not the ill opinions of the world. Unless we care for *māna* and hate *avamāna*, we cannot progress in moral life. But to the pilgrim on the path to perfection, there comes a stage when he is well established in *sattva* and when a life of selflessness and service results spontaneously from his inward illumination. It is only then that he can become a *guṇātīta* and disregard the opinion of the world in shaping his conduct. His attitude towards praise and blame is then one of inner indifference.

In like manner, we have to understand the statement that the *guṇatita* treats his friends and foes alike. It would be obviously foolish to understand this to mean that he treats his friends as foes and foes as friends. Love towards friends is a valuable stimulus to selflessness in the life of this world, and this fact is in no way ignored by what is taught here. We are now dealing with one who has reached the ultimate stage of perfection possible for man.

Such a person will be actuated with love towards all; the attitudes and dispositions of other persons towards him can have no modifying influence on his own attitude of spontaneous love and service in relation to them.

Finally, he is described as *sarvārambha-parityāgin*, one who has given up all selfish work. By *ārambha*, we have to understand such work as, having a motive behind it, is calculated to continue the bondage of the soul. It is well to note here once again that no one can give up all work and lead a life of passive inaction. So long as the soul is encased in flesh, work of some kind is inevitable. The spirit is in a prison and must obey the discipline of its gaol. But one can feel detached towards the work that is required of one in this world; one can lead a life which is characterised by the dispassionate performance of one's duty. One can realise that work in this world of *samsāra* is impelled and executed by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* and refuse to attribute to the soul the agency which belongs to the *guṇas*. It is such an attitude that is required of the *guṇātīta*. He will live and labour like the rest of mankind, but there will be no selfish motive of any kind in association with his work.

This verse completes the description begun some time ago of the way of life of the *guṇātīta*. Some of you may have observed that in most respects, it resembles the account given of the sage of steady wisdom in Chapter II, of the *yogin* in Chapter VI, and of the *bhakta* in Chapter XII. This resemblance is due to the fact that every way of approach to God is built on the unalterable foundations of ethics. Whether one is a *bhakta* or a *yogin*, a follower of the path of *karma* or a *guṇātīta*, one must lead a life of *samatva* and service. We may all attain in different ways the power to live that kind of life which opens the door-way of Heaven. But that life will not differ in its fundamentals from person to person. In fact, we have all along seen that differences in metaphysics, such as divide our great *āchāryas*, do not give rise to differences of opinion in regard to the course of practical conduct that is recommended in the *Gītā*. When looking at the *Gītā* as the science of conduct every one reads practically the same lesson from it. Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to explain how the life of the *guṇātīta* may be lived.

मां च योऽव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते ।
स गुणान्समतीत्यैतान् ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥ २६ ॥

26. And whoever serves Me with unswerving devotion—he, rising above the *gunas*, becomes fit for the attainment of the *Brahman*.

To enable one to lead the life of the *gunātita*, the adoption of *bhakti-yoga* is here recommended. It is to be borne in mind that the *bhakti-yoga* which is prescribed must be *avyabhichāra*. This may be understood as meaning that the way of devotion alone must be resorted to, and that the aspirant should take care to see that there is no admixture of *karma* and *jñāna* in the practice of his *bhakti-yoga*. Such a view appears to me unduly narrow. Why should Śrī Kṛishṇa insist on a particular method of reaching the goal of highest perfection, to the exclusion of all others, when He has taught us definitely that God is the recipient of all kinds of worship? Men in all manner of ways follow His path. Every rite and every religion is directed to the worship of the one only God of the *Vedānta*, whatever may be the conscious objective of the worshippers. That being so, it is preferable to understand the significance of the epithet, '*avyabhichāra*', to be that the devotion which is recommended must have none other than God for its object. For we have also been taught that we attain such fruits only as are suited to our worship. It is only when we look upon Vāsudeva as the All and the All-in-all that we are assured of the reward of enduring emancipation.

When we realise that God is the receiver of all worship and the bestower of all rewards, when we get a glimpse of His glory by learning a little of the royal secret of His simultaneous immanence and transcendence, then we will worship Him for the sole reason that it is our duty to do so. It is such disinterested devotion that is referred to here. When God is the object of all our desires, all the things of this world lose their value and one acquires that equanimity of temperament and evenness of outlook which constitute the inner indifference of the *gunātīta*. By such a life of *samatva* and service, we become fit to attain the *Brahman*, that is, we become the *Brahman* or become like unto the *Brahman*. The supreme value of devotion has thus once again been emphasised;

and in the next *śloka* Śrī Kṛishṇa reminds us of the great lesson already taught, that a life of devotion to God means a life of *samatva* and service here and of eternal bliss hereafter.

ब्रह्मणो हि प्रतिष्ठाहममृतस्याव्ययस्य च ।
शाश्वतस्य च धर्मस्य सुखस्यैकान्तिकस्य च ॥ २७ ॥

27. For I am the basic support of the world of matter and of that which is indestructible and immortal, of everlasting righteousness and of complete bliss.

There is no unanimity of opinion about the interpretation of the word, '*brahman*', which occurs in the first line of this verse. It has been understood to refer to the *Para Brahman*, the *Vedas*, Lakshmī and *prakṛiti*. If we adopt the view that it is the *Para Brahman* that is mentioned here, then the statement that Śrī Kṛishṇa is the *pratishṭhā* or support of the *Brahman* can mean nothing more than an assertion of absolute identity between Śrī Kṛishṇa and the Absolute. It appears to me, however, more appropriate to the context to look upon the word, '*brahman*', as standing for *pṛakriti*, or as I have translated it, the world of matter. You may recall that at the commencement of this chapter (in *śloka* 4) the word has already been used in this somewhat unusual sense. The conjunction, '*cha*', occurring at the end of the first line, seems to imply that two distinct things are mentioned therein. If one of them is *amṛita* and *avyaya*, immortal and undecaying, and the other is the *brahman*, then surely this *brahman* cannot be the Absolute; for there seems to be an implied contrast between the *brahman* on the one hand and what is *amṛita* and *avyaya* on the other. Of course, there is not the least difficulty in looking upon God as the support of *prakṛiti*; for we have already seen that God pervades, penetrates and controls the whole universe of matter and energy and consciousness. In other words, *prakṛiti* is what it is because of God; it depends for its very existence on God.

Now, let us try to see what that imperishable immortality is, of which also Śrī Kṛishṇa declares himself to be the prop and foundation. Very obviously, the reference is to the world of

mind, as contradistinguished from the world of matter. Even in the second chapter, Śrī Kṛishṇa has explained that the fundamental difference between matter and soul consists in the fact that, while the former is mutable and mortal, the latter is immutable and immortal. And just as God is the *pratishṭhā* of *prakṛiti*, He is the foundation and support of spirit. In other words, both matter and mind rest on God and depend on Him for their very existence.

Then Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to add that He is the support and foundation of everlasting righteousness as well. We have had occasion to see that God alone can be the authoritative basis and sanction of all morality. *Śāśvata-dharma* is the everlasting rule of life, which naturally follows from a knowledge of the nature of *prakṛiti* as being supported by God and of the world of indestructible immortality also as being supported by God. This rule of life must continue to be the same as long as this *prakṛiti* and the world of immortality continue to remain unaltered. And in the last analysis, morality is as solid and substantial a fact as the world of matter or that of mind. If we believe in the ultimate indestructibility of the nature of *prakṛiti* and the ultimate immortality of the soul, we cannot help believing in the ultimate rectitude of righteousness, which is enduring and which endures because God is its support.

When we follow this rule of righteousness, we attain unto perfect bliss. In the world of *saṁsāra*, many experiences come our way. Some of them are pleasant, but most of them give us pain. And even as the dusk follows the dawn and midnight treads on the heels of noon, pain hurries in the wake of pleasure. There is, indeed, no pleasure so exquisite or perfect as to give us lasting satisfaction. Besides, pleasures also tend to weaken our moral fibre; you know how the experience of practical wisdom has come to the conclusion that one's true worth is always tested in adversity. Attachment is the cause of all bondage; and there is no force that forges fetters for our souls so strongly and quickly as the pleasures of this world. But a different happiness awaits us in the world of indestructible immortality, which is the natal home as well as the destined goal of the soul. In fact, it would be wrong to call it 'pleasure'; it is happiness free from all limitations; it is perfect, unqualified, divine bliss.

Here then are some of the important questions that we have to answer, if we are to attain this *aikāntika-sukha* by following the rule of eternal righteousness. We have to know this world in which we have to live and labour, and we have also to know whether there is anything beyond and above it. If there are values to be attained which transcend this world, we have to know the method by which they may be attained. Śrī Kṛishṇa has dealt with all these questions briefly here. He is the support of this world as well as of the world beyond, where one may enjoy perfect bliss. And He is the support of the rule of life by which one may attain that blissful world. This rule of life is the rule of rectitude and righteousness, and it is as enduring as the everlasting nature of God Himself.

What we have considered so far is only one of the many possible interpretations of this interesting and important *śloka*. According to Rāmānujāchārya, we have here a reference to the goals attained by the various classes of *bhaktas* referred to in Chapter VII, verse 16. You may remember that this teacher reduced the four types mentioned there to three. *Arta* and *arthārthin* were grouped together as one ; for both are seekers of prosperity and power. One who has lost what he had and seeks it anew is *ārta* ; one who wants wealth and power, having never had them before, is *arthārthin*. These, according to Śrī Rāmānujā, worship God with the object of attaining *aiśvarya*. Then there is the *jijñāsu*, the seeker after knowledge ; the knowledge here referred to is not the knowledge of the *jñanin*, who realises that Vāsudeva is All and All-in-All, but only the knowledge of the nature of the soul as fundamentally distinct from the embodiment in which it is forced to dwell. It is believed by Rāmānujāchārya that self-realisation may lead one to the state known as *kaivalya* or self-abidance, when the soul realises its inherent freedom and bliss, but fails to understand its utter dependence on God. Lastly, there is the *jñānin*, who is devoted to God because it is his duty to do so.

In this verse, Śrī Rāmānuja explains, it is taught that God is the sole bestower of the results and rewards attained by these three types of worshippers. All of them attain the state known as *guṇātyaya* or the transcendence of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* by being devoted to God. Thereafter, their own ideals and

inclinations determine the goals that they severally reach. The *jijñāsu* attains the *Brahman*, that is to say, the state of self-abidance, when the soul realises its lonely majesty and solitary grandeur ; it is this *kaivalya* which is mentioned in the previous *śloka*. The *ārta* and *arthārthin* attain the eternal *dharma* ; that is to say, they attain the prosperity and power that are the rewards of those who follow the injunctions of *dharma*. Lastly, the *jñānin*, who is dear to the Lord and who worships Him with disinterested and single-minded devotion, attains the perfect and complete bliss of eternal beatitude.

Śaṅkarāchārya renders the *śloka* in yet another manner. Śrī Kṛishṇa is understood to say in effect: "I am that in which abides the *Brahman*, which is immortal and changeless, which is the goal of eternal *dharma* and whose nature is supreme bliss." In other words, the *Īśvara* is identified with the *Nirguṇa-brahman* ; for there lies between them only such a difference as divides energy from the possessor of energy.

With the consideration of this stanza, we finish our study of the fourteenth chapter. And as usual, before proceeding further, we will do well to make a brief survey of the teachings of this chapter. It is called, as you are well aware, *guṇa-traya-vibhāga-yoga*, and as we have seen, it deals with the distinctive characteristics of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. The term, '*prakṛiti*', corresponds roughly to what in European philosophical parlance is described as matter. It is a principle or category of existence which is fundamentally distinct from what is often called the soul or 'mind'. The vital difference between soul and matter consists in this, that while the former is immutable and immortal, the latter is mutable and mortal. The essential nature of the soul is blissful awareness. In the condition of embodied existence, the soul loses its pristine purity and power and becomes subject to numerous limitations. This, it is taught, is due to the influence of *karma*.

Now, all this is more or less similar to the Sāṅkhyan analysi of the universe into *prakṛiti* and *purusha*, the inert and the conscious. Most of the technical terms of the Sāṅkhya philosophy are found in the *Gītā*. It is conceived by Kapila and his followers that matter undergoes a series of evolutionary modifications from

its original condition of undifferentiated homogeneity. And for all these changes, it is believed, the cause is to be found in the interplay of what are called the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. They are constituents of *prakṛiti*; *prakṛiti* is composed of them. They are three in number and are called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. When the three *guṇas* are in a state of balance, *prakriti* is in its state of restful harmony. All the other conditions of matter are due to the dominance of one or other of these *guṇas*.

It is important to stress here the fact that the *guṇas* are material. In Sanskrit metaphysics, the concept of matter is given a more extended significance than is warranted by our common usage. It is held that the field of matter includes much that we are apt to look on as psychological. In fact, experience in this world is conceived to be due largely to the association of the soul with matter, and hence much of our thinking and feeling in this life is held to be material. To liberate ourselves from bondage, we must refuse to identify ourselves with the work that we have to do in life. The *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* impel and execute all work in this world. Each of these *guṇas* has distinctive characteristics. *Sattva* is luminous and pleasant, *rajas* is stimulating and active, and *tamas* is dark and dull. These *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* may be looked upon roughly as states of matter, or as matter with varying distributions of energy. But it is also believed that they have a mental and moral significance. This is easily explained, if we understand that Indian thought believes in a close correspondence between the physical constitution on the one hand and the mental and moral temperament on the other of every individual. Some modern psychologists also maintain, as we have seen, that the structure and composition of a man's brain are very largely responsible for the intellectual power and moral strength which he possesses and displays in life. How and in what manner the structure of the brain and in consequence a man's moral and intellectual endowment is moulded is a large question; faith in *karma* and heredity helps the *Vedāntin* to solve this problem to some extent. It is in this way that we have to understand the correspondence between the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* and various material qualities.

It has also been shown to us that the mental and moral equipment with which a man starts in life need not hinder him

from progress in spiritual life. For though some one *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* dominates any particular individual, all the *guṇas* are present in all. And it is open to any one to place himself more and more under the sway of the desirable *sattva* and increase his chances of salvation as the days go by and one embodiment succeeds another. But even the *sattva-guṇa* has a binding tendency ; it makes people fall in love with its own sweetness and light and thus delays the day of final release. The essential priliminary to obtain freedom for the soul consists in the acquisition of a serene detachment of spirit, which views with deliberate unconcern the noise and tumult of daily life, but yet succeeds in stimulating a life of loving service and utter self-abnegation. No better method of acquiring this state of rare spiritual perfection can be thought of than that of heart-felt devotion to God. In the dazzling splendour of this radiant love, all lesser attachments fade away as the stars before the sun. Whatever the goal we may have in view, it is the Lord who helps us to reach it. For He is the foundation and support of this universe and of the world beyond, the authority and sanction behind the law of righteousness, and the guarantor of perfect and unending bliss to the soul at the end of its wanderings.

A very interesting analysis of the contents of this chapter has been made by Yāmunāchārya in his *Gītārthasaṅgraha*. He says :

गुणबंधविधा तेषां कर्तृत्वं तन्निवर्तनम् ।
गतित्रयस्वमूलत्वं चतुर्दश उदीर्यते ॥

The fourteenth (chapter) declares the various ways in which the *guṇas* bind, the responsibility of *prakṛiti* for all actions, release therefrom and the divine foundation for all the three goals.

Most of the essential points of the foregoing discussion have been brought out succintly here. The main point to be noted is that the *guṇas* tend to bind, so long as we fail to understand that they alone are the agents of all our deeds. When this is understood and we get rid of selfishness, then the *guṇas* no longer bind us. The state of final liberation is then near at hand. And the Lord rewards us according to our deserts. We may attain the

state of self-abidance, or attain prosperity and power, or enjoy eternal beatitude.

CHAPTER XV

lxiv

To-day we have to begin the study of the fifteenth chapter. It may seem to you at first sight that there is a break in the continuity of Śrī Kṛishṇa's discourse, as the chapter begins rather abruptly with the description of a peculiar *aśvattha* tree. In reality, however, it is not so. The fifteenth chapter, in fact, may be looked upon as an elaborate commentary on the last *śloka* of the fourteenth chapter, wherein Śrī Kṛishṇa spoke of Himself as the foundation and support of the worlds of matter and mind, and as the sanction and authority behind the moral law. Hereafter, Śrī Kṛishṇa deals with the relations of God to *prakṛiti* and *purusha* and explains how He is the source and sanction of all morality. In the thirteenth chapter, the principal theme was the soul in its relation to God and matter. In the next, the physical universe of matter and energy was discussed ; the binding influence of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* on the soul was pointed out, and the way of release from that influence by devotion to God was clearly shown. Seeking now to explain the dependence of both the physical universe and the finite self on God, Śrī Kṛishṇa uses a beautiful and well-adapted simile ; He speaks of a fig tree, with its roots high in Heaven, and its branches spread down below. The description begins thus :

श्री भगवानुवाच—

ऊर्ध्वमूलमधश्शाखमश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् ।
छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ॥ १ ॥

ŚRĪ KṚISHṆA SAID :

1. They speak of an imperishable *aśvattha* tree, which has its roots upwards and its branches downwards, and whose leaves are the *Vedas*. He who knows it knows the *Vedas*.

There is a very fair consensus of opinion among the commentators as to what this tree stands for. Most of them

understand it to refer to *samsāra*, that is, the series of successive births and deaths that is imposed on all souls bound by the chains of *karma*. The visible universe wherein we live is often spoken of as the world of *samsāra*, and there is no great harm in equating this with what is spoken of as the phenomenal universe in European thought. The *aśvattha* tree symbolises not merely *samsāra*, but also the world wherein the life of *samsāra* must be lived by the embodied soul. The physical universe of matter and energy, and our lives of varied experiences are comprehensively brought under the metaphor of the tree.

Let us now go back a little. You may remember that in the last stanza of the fourteenth chapter, the term, '*brahman*', was used in the rather peculiar sense of *prakṛiti*, the visible, material world. There it was stated that God is the mainstay and support of this universe. If the *aśvattha* tree stands for the visible universe and the life of *samsāra*, it is now easy to see that its roots must be above. For it proceeds from God, who is its *pratishṭhā*, and naturally He is above this world of ours. It also follows that these roots spreading upwards to God will be ordinarily invisible. The phenomenal universe and the life of embodied beings within it constitute the downward-spreading branches that fall within the range of our vision.

This tree is declared to be indestructible and eternal, because we cannot say when creation began, nor again when it will cease to be. You may ask, of course, whether we can speak of the world of *samsāra* as eternal, when souls are described in the scriptures as ever and anon attaining liberation. It is certainly true that souls may and often do attain freedom from the bondage of matter and win the salvation of *moksha*. And the attainment of *moksha* certainly means that there is no further compulsion on the enfranchised soul to live the life of *samsāra*. The liberated live in that other world of indestructible immortality, of which also God is the *pratishṭhā*. But if they so choose, out of their own free will, they can enter again the world of matter; it seems to me that Śrī Kṛishṇa has told us that they do so frequently. Śri Krishṇa Himself was born into the world of men in order that righteousness might be upheld.

Now it is plain that any soul which has attained salvation need not live in the world of *samsāra*; it is possible for such a soul to be free from any contact whatsoever with the world of matter. But this does not mean that the world of *prakṛiti* must cease to be, when any soul has gained the blissful freedom of *moksha*. In fact, we cannot even say that the world of *prakṛiti* must cease to exist when all the souls attain freedom. So long as we hold that matter and spirit are distinct categories of existence, the separation of one from the other and the ending of all association between the two cannot be regarded as bringing destruction to one of the two. That is why Indian thought looks upon both *prakṛiti* and *purusha* as unborn and eternal. And this view appears to me to be supported by the conclusion of modern science that matter is in essence indestructible. It can be modified, it can pass from one state of aggregation to another, grosser or finer; but it can never be annihilated. You can now see how it is not possible for us to trace back this phenomenal universe to a point of time when it was not, nor foresee a state of things when it will cease to be. The *aśvattha* tree, therefore, deserves to be called indestructible.

The leaves of this tree are the *Vedas*. On the exact significance of this statement, different opinions are held by the authoritative commentators. It has been suggested that, even as it is the function of the leaves of a tree to protect and nourish it, the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the *Vedas* protect and nourish the life of *samsāra*. If this view is adopted, no flattering reference can be understood to have been made to the ritualistic portion of the *Vedas*. This, however, will hardly surprise any one who has studied the *Gītā* with some care. Śri Krishṇa frequently emphasises the fact that the performance of *Vedic* rituals with selfish ends in view can never lead us on to the salvation of soul-emancipation and God-attainment. And it may be urged that this interpretation is supported by the description in the next verse of the objects of senses (*vishaya*) as tender shoots (*pravāla*). One difficulty, however, may be felt. Of the two references to the *Vedas* in this stanza, if the first may be thus taken to refer to the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the *Vedas*, the second cannot be understood otherwise than as an allusion to the *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. So much for this view.

Now, leaves constitute in more than one sense an important part of a plant. They help it to breathe and live, they supply to it inexhaustible energy from the sun. The condition of leaves generally indicates the state of health of the plant. The leaves precede and in a sense lead on to flowering and fruiting. Considerations such as these may induce us to look upon the expression, '*chhandāṃsi*', as indicating the most valuable part of the Revelation. The leaves of the *aśvattha* tree, we may say, have a special value in enabling us to undertand the life of the tree itself. In this world there is nothing more valuable than the *Vedas*. For if the soul is to attain perfect bliss, it must observe the *śāśvata-dharma*, of which God is the stay and support. And the *Vedas* teach us this everlasting rule of righteousness and elevate us to the world of indestructible immortality and the enjoyment of the *aikāntika-sukha*, of which Śrī Kṛishṇa spoke in the last *śloka* of the fourteenth chapter. They are the means by which we can attain salvation. The *Vedas* belong to this world, because they are spoken words. But they remain the most valuable part of this 'phenomenal' universe. They constitute the manifestation of the real life of this *aśvattha* tree, whose invisible roots link it with God Himself.

One who understands the truth about this fig tree is here declared to be a knower of the *Vedas*. A *Vedavit* is not one who can chant all the hymns of the *Vedas* without the slightest error; he must know their meaning and understand the main purport of their teachings. To know the truth about the tree implies the knowledge of the divine support and foundation for the life of *saṃsāra* and the realisation that the only goal worth striving for is the liberation of the soul from the bondage of matter. This, of course, does not mean that men must lead stunted or incomplete lives, nor that they should retire from the stress of life. It is always well to remember that Śrī Kṛishṇa's teaching is directed to make Arjuna fight in the great war. The *Gītā* does not encourage passive inaction. It teaches the necessity of work, but warns us against attaching ourselves to our work and achievement. Judged by a true scale of values, there is nothing worthy of our attachment in this world. Let us do the duties that our embodied condition of existence imposes on us; but let us at the same time take care not to pin our faith and ambition to this world. If we are wise,

we will strive to reach that other world of immortality, where there is perfect bliss. It is this view of life which is the burden of the *Vedas*. A *Vedavit* must be one fully steeped in this teaching. Knowing the truth about the fig tree means, therefore, knowing its position in the scheme of things. It includes the conviction that the life of *saṃsāra* imposes limitations on the soul and that the soul must try to reach God, who is the foundation and support of *saṃsāra* through the divinely ordained law of righteousness. That is how we have to equate the knowledge of the fig tree with the knowledge of the *Vedas*.

अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतास्तस्य शाखा गुणप्रवृद्धा विषयप्रवालाः ।
अधश्च मूलान्यनुसन्ततानि कर्मानुबन्धीनि मनुष्यलोके ॥ २ ॥

2. Above and below are spread its branches, nourished by the *guṇas* (of *prakṛiti*) and with the objects of the senses as their tender shoots; and down to the world of men extend (its) roots that result from *karma*.

We were told in the last verse that the branches of the *aśvattha* tree spread below; we now learn that they are spread above and below. Some of you may feel that there is a contradiction here. A moment's consideration, however, is enough to show us that we are merely told here that the branches which are below the roots, spread both above and below. That is to say, in the region in which they extend, they spread in all directions. These branches are nourished by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. The life of *saṃsāra* derives its sustenance from the *guṇas*; though it is the soul which experiences, the raw matter of experience is furnished by *prakṛiti*. In this sense, the life of *saṃsāra* is fed and nourished by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. The objects of the senses, which constitute the physical basis of the phenomenal universe, sprout out from these branches. There are also roots which extend down to the world of men. You may remember that in the last *śloka* we learnt that the roots of this *aśvattha* tree reach upwards to the feet of God. What then are these roots, which are here declared to extend down to the world of men? I think it is clear that the roots that are now referred to are different from the roots formerly spoken of. In the language of botany, we may say that these roots are dependent roots.

You have all seen the banyan tree. It has, of course, main roots digging deep into earth, but you must also have observed root-like structures growing from the branches and spreading down to the ground. These latter are called dependent roots. Now, the *aśvattha* tree has its main roots extending upwards to God. But it has also dependent roots reaching down to the world of men. And the nature of these roots is determined by *karma*. In other words, these roots bind the embodied beings in the world of men by means of their *karma*.

The stanza is thus a description of the visible part of the great *aśvattha* tree. The purport of this *śloka* is different from that of the first, which delineates the entire tree with its invisible roots. The visible part consists of the branches with their leaves and dependent roots. Of these a detailed description is found here. But even of this visible part of the tree in which our life is cast, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to point out, we can get only a glimpse here.

न रूपमस्येह तथोपलभ्यते नान्तो न चादिर्न च संप्रतिष्ठा ।
अश्वत्थमेनं सुविरूढमूलमसङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढेन छित्वा ॥ ३ ॥

ततः पदं तत्परिमार्गितव्यं यस्मिन्गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः ।
तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्येद्यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी ॥ ४ ॥

3-4. In this manner, its form is not comprehended here, nor its end, nor its beginning, nor yet its support. Having cut this firm-rooted *aśvattha* tree with the strong sword of non-attachment, that seat has then to be sought for, wherefrom those who go there never return, and one should seek refuge with that primal Person from whom this ancient process emanated.

The complete outline of even the visible part of the tree with its radiating branches, its tender shoots and dependent roots, cannot be perceived by any one here in this world of *samsāra*. We cannot say where the branches end or begin. Think of a big banyan tree extending over an acre of land. And suppose you place yourself quite close to it. How much of this tree can you see at a time? Not the whole tree surely. It will be possible for

you only to see a small part of it. In a like manner, only a tiny bit of this vast phenomenal universe comes within the range of your observation and experience. But that ought to be sufficient to enable you to make out that the branches spread in all directions, that they are nourished by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* and have *vishaya* for their tender shoots. But what you see does not help you to determine how big the tree is, where it begins and ends. We have already seen that we cannot make out either the beginning or the end of *samsāra*. But we do understand something of it. And it is this something which has been described in the previous stanza.

You may say that to be able to know the truth about a thing, we must know its origin as well as its culmination. That is of course true. When you know these, your knowledge becomes certain, complete and perfect; but if you cannot know them, it does not follow that what you know is untrue or unreal. You may remember that we were dealing with a similar case in discussing the *anāditva* of *karma*. I remember to have drawn your attention then to the nature of our knowledge of a river. If you do not know the source and mouth of a river, you cannot say that the river is unreal. It means only that you know a part instead of the whole. Similarly, the fact that we cannot know the beginning nor the end of this tree does not make it unreal. Only a particular part of the tree falls within the rang- of our experience. It may be that different persons learn to know different parts of it, and that part is different from part. Each of the infinite number of beings in the universe has only a partial and incomplete knowledge of the tree; and none knows the whole. This does not entitle us to hold that the tree of the universe is non-existent.

We cannot also see its *sampratishṭhā*. The beginning and the end of this tree must be parts of this visible universe; for since the branches of the tree make up this universe, the beginning and the end of the tree must lie within its borders. But even these are beyond our knowledge. Some may be near the 'beginning' or the 'end' of the tree, if such there be, and may get some knowledge thereof; but not as the beginning or the end, since such precise knowledge involves knowledge of the whole. While

thus even the beginning and the end of this tree elude our knowledge, it is hardly surprising that what is above and beyond the universe and is its foundation and support should lie beyond the ambit of our knowledge. The whole of this universe cannot fall within the range of our perception; its invisible divine stay and support lies even farther away from the field of our vision.

The roots of this tree are well-grown and firmly established. Two kinds of roots, you may remember, were spoken of, and both these may well be understood to have been referred to here. The roots by which the tree derives its sustentation and support from the one and only store-house of life and energy in the universe, as well as the roots by which embodied souls are bound to this world, are *su-virūḍha*. But, as will be seen presently, the dependent roots of *karma* can be cut asunder and destroyed, while the main roots are indestructible.

Such in brief is an outline of this *aśvattha* tree. Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to state that it has to be cut by the weapon of non-attachment. Let us try to understand clearly what this cutting means. It cannot mean a fatal rending and splitting of the tree. It does not lie within our power to annihilate this phenomenal universe, which is indestructible. We cannot cut and destroy what is immortal. We cannot divide the tree from its divine foundation and deprive it of its support and sustenance. But every embodied being is imprisoned and bound by the dependent roots of *karma*. These, too, are well-grown and firmly established. And it is these which we must cut and destroy, if we are to rise to the world of immortality. It is this partial cutting which is referred to in this *śloka*. No severance of the connection between the tree and its main roots in God can be meant here. The instrument with which we can cut ourselves away from the entangling roots of *karma* is the sword of non-attachment. For, as we have seen, it is the attachment that we form to our work and to the results thereof that creates for us the bonds of *karma*. Once we attain freedom from attachment, we are beyond the tyranny of *karma*.

Having cut the *aśvattha* tree in this manner and freed yourself from the entanglement of the dependent roots of *karma*, you have

to seek the abode of immortality, the seat of God. 'It is only when all attachment has ceased that you can commence to seek the world of immortality. So long as the least taint of selfishness lurks, so long your attempts to attain salvation will not succeed. That is why Śrī Kṛishna makes use of the expression, '*tataḥ*' (then); it clearly signifies that the tree must be cut before the search is begun for that bourne whence no traveller returns. Returns, that is, under compulsion. For there is nothing to prevent the emancipated souls from re-entering the world of *samsāra*, when they want to help those who are struggling down there.

That abode of immortality is your destined goal as well as your natal home. Trailing clouds of glory do we come from the feet of God and thither do we return at the end of our long pilgrimage. The stream of life and work took its rise there and will assuredly find its final haven of rest also there. To attain this consummation, we must surrender ourselves to God. Seeking the abode of immortality is to seek refuge at the feet of God. As we will see later, the surest and quickest way of reaching God is by the method of self-surrender. With the utmost trust and confidence in His grace and with a felt realisation of our own numerous imperfections and weaknesses, we must throw ourselves entirely at His mercy, leaving it to Him to dispose us of, as He pleases.

It is well to note here some of the different readings adopted for the third line of the fourth *śloka*. The translation given above follows the version of Rāmānujāchārya and is based on the reading, *prapadyet yataḥ*. Śaṅkarāchārya reads *prapadye-yataḥ* and splits it up thiswise: *prapadye yataḥ*. In that case, the translation must run: "One must then seek the abode of immortality, (thinking) 'I seek refuge (with Him) from whom....'" Rāmānujāchārya also notices this reading, but he prefers to split it up as *prapadya iyataḥ*. According to this view, the verse must be interpreted thus: Surrendering ourselves to God, from whom all this (visible universe) has sprung forth, we must seek the abode of immortality. It will be seen that the different readings and interpretations noticed do not materially affect the main purport of the verse, which recommends seeking refuge at the lotus feet of God as the surest means of salvation.

निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषा अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः ।
द्वन्द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञैर्गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत् ॥ ५ ॥

5. Those who are free from pride and delusion, who have conquered the evil of attachment, who are constant in (the comtemplation of) the self, who have abandoned desire and who are free from the (influence of the) pair of opposites known as pleasure and pain, reach undeluded that immutable seat.

In the last *śloka* we were taught that one must seek the seat of immortal bliss, only after one acquires certain qualities, and these were comprehensively described by the metaphor that first of all the *aśvattha* tree must be firmly cut with the sword of detachment. That idea is further elaborated now. Those who reach that world of immortality wherein the attainment of God becomes possible, must be free from faults of intelligence and faults of emotion. Their head and heart must both be sound and sane.

They must be devoid of the pride and conceit arising out of a mistaken sense of their own importance. They must have a proper sense of values and suffer from no delusions of any kind. Once the evil of attachment which springs from delusion is conquered, it is easy to contemplate the nature of the soul and its destiny. Freedom from attachment to things of the world very naturally leads on to the transfer of our attention to the welfare of our souls. This, however, cannot be complete or satisfactory so long as a relish after the enjoyment of the objects of the senses persists. It is one thing to give up the things of this world, and it is quite another to give up the relish after enjoyment of those things. The desire to have more and more of things which happen to be pleasurable is different from attachment to things which one considers to be near and dear. Freedom from *kāma* is even more difficult of accomplishment than freedom from attachment. To suppress the tendency of the mind to run after objects of desire is the hardest of tasks. A *sannyāsin* cannot be said to be internally free unless the relish for enjoyment of the objects of the senses has left him, although he might have acquired a certain amount of external freedom by cutting himself

away from the obligations of family and social life, by owning no property and by deciding to live on whatever food he may obtain in charity. To give up the relish for things of enjoyment is more difficult than to give up the things of enjoyment themselves. Unless the relish for things of this world is killed at the heart, one cannot be *vinivṛitta-kāma*; and this is the most essential qualification for attaining unto that world of bliss and immortality.

When one is free from all desires, it follows that one will be free from the natural and universal tendency to like that which is agreeable and pleasant and dislike that which is disagreeable and unpleasant. Intellectual as well as moral wisdom comes to one who has attained these qualities, which open the gateway to immortality. Rich in the wisdom of the spirit, and free from ignorance of all kinds, he enjoys perfect bliss and attains unto God. It is thus abundantly clear that we must rise above this world, if we are to conquer the next.

lxv

Last time I endeavoured to point out to you how the fifteenth chapter is a kind of commentary on the last *śloka* of the fourteenth chapter, wherein Śrī Kṛishṇa declares that He is the foundation and support of this visible universe, of the world of indestructible immortality which appertains to the soul, of that rule of righteousness whereby souls pass from their life of material bondage to freedom and enjoyment of eternal bliss, and of that divine and perfect happiness which belongs to the condition of the emancipated souls. We must try to see how these things are explained in the fifteenth chapter.

Śrī Kṛishṇa began this chapter with the description of a peculiar *aśvattha* tree, with its roots reaching upwards to God and its branches spread down below. It, is as we saw, a metaphor for this world of pain and pleasure, of life and death. The figure of the tree with its roots in God brings home forcibly to us the fact that God is the support and basis of this universe. The souls are cabined, cribbed, and confined here by the dependent roots of *karma*. If the souls are to rise from this world of *samsāra* to that other world wherein there is neither birth nor death, then they

must cut themselves free from the entanglements of *karma*. To win freedom from the bondage of *karma* and to help the soul to regain its own natural sphere of existence, it is necessary for us to be free from selfish attachment. When we have conquered the alluring influences of selfishness, the roots of *karma* are cut asunder and the gates of Heaven open before us.

Now follows a description of that world of indestructible immortality, of perfect and undying bliss. It may be doubted whether the nature of that world can be fully understood by us. For we may be sure that the world of emancipated souls cannot be the world of space and time. It is the limitation which the phenomenal universe places upon the power of the soul, that is largely responsible for our apprehension of the universe as one of space and time. That other world is often spoken of as transcending space and time. What this means, it is hard to realise, for our knowledge is bound up with ideas of space and time. Knowledge of what transcends this universe is ordinarily impossible for most, if not, all of us. Language, which has grown out of the normal experience of mankind, cannot describe the world of immortality.

Even our mental conception of that world is bound to be more or less materialistic, being determined by the very nature and constitution of our minds. And any oral or written description must be much less adequate than our mental image of that universe. Still some kind of description is necessary, however vague or unsatisfactory, if that world is to be something more than a mere word to us. In the verse that follows, Śrī Kṛishṇa attempts to describe what is essentially indescribable.

न तद्भासयते सूर्यो न शशाङ्को न पावकः ।
यद्गत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥ ६ ॥

6. The sun does not illumine it, nor the moon, nor fire; it is My supreme abode, going to which they do not return.

We have already seen what is meant by the statement that the blessed do not return to this world. They do not return under

compulsion, but they may and do return frequently with the beneficent object of guiding and redeeming those who are compelled to sojourn in the tragic world of *samsāra*. Śrī Kṛishṇa Himself came down to the world of men from His own supreme abode and lived here as a man among men for the establishment of righteousness, the protection of the good and the destruction of the wicked. So let us bear in mind that the declaration of Śri Krishṇa that those who reach His supreme abode never return to this world means merely that they are fully free from the bondage of *karma* and are no longer *compelled* to be born again and again in the world of *samsāra*.

Śrī Kṛishṇa describes His supreme abode as being lighted neither by the sun, nor by the moon, nor even by fire. A cynic might infer with inexcusable flippancy that it must be a very dark place. The true intention of Śrī Kṛishṇa in making this description is not very hard to seek. What He means to convey may be gathered by considering certain phenomena which have come within the range of experience of most of us. In the presence of the sun, the moon retires into obscurity. A lamp held in the sunlight fails to give us any light whatever. It cannot, however, be that either the moon or the flame ceases to illumine in the presence of the sun. They continue to serve as sources of light, but the intensity of the illumination that they produce is insignificant when compared with the incomparable radiance of the sun and thus they escape our notice. In the presence of a larger and more intense light, the small and weaker one naturally fades away. It is in this sense that we have to understand the statement that in the supreme abode of the Lord, the sun, the moon and fire do not give any light. A light is there which is more powerful and more intense than even the light of the sun. Like a flame held in the sunlight, the sun appears thoroughly insignificant there ; and when even the sun fails to be of any consequence, there is no need to speak of the moon or of fire.

It is, of course, of some interest to ask whether, by this reference to light, we have to understand light in its ordinary physical sense of something which has a characteristic effect on the retina of our eyes, or whether we have to attribute thereto a figurative significance. In the latter case, light must stand for the

principle of consciousness, which makes us aware of ourselves and of the world around us. Light in this context, therefore, may mean simply splendour, or it may signify effulgence of power, knowledge and wisdom. Whatever it may mean, the underlying idea is clear. The most radiant thing in this world, whether in a physical or a metaphorical sense, pales into insignificance in the presence of the Lord. Notice that Śri Kṛishṇa speaks of this world of immortality as His own supreme abode. It is thus that He is the stay and support—the *pratishṭhā*—of that world which He described by the epithets, '*avyaya*' and '*amṛita*', inexhaustible and immortal, in the last stanza of the fourteenth chapter.

Now, the question may arise: if that other world of indestructible immortality, to which we have to rise, is the abode of the Lord Himself, how are we entitled to make that our permanent home? It is not every one that can share our home with us. Strangers dare not make free of our homes. The fact that some one is sharing your home with you is enough to make others infer that that person is intimately related to you by ties of love or blood. Since Śri Kṛishṇa offers His home to those who surrender themselves to Him, it is reasonable to infer that some kind of intimate relationship must exist between the struggling souls in the world of *samsāra* and the Lord Himself. Of that relationship, He now proceeds to speak.

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतस्सनातनः ।

मनष्षष्ठानीन्द्रियाणि प्रकृतिस्थानि कर्षति ॥ ७ ॥

7. It is an eternal part of Myself, which, having become an individual soul in the world of life, draws to itself the senses, which are seated in *prakṛiti*, and of which the mind is the sixth.

All the souls in the universe have sprung from God like sparks from a fire. Each is an eternal part of God, a fraction of the divine essence. Nothing can be more closely related to us than an integral part of ourselves, and it is this intimate relation that enables the souls to claim the supreme abode of God as their own abiding home. All souls are of the nature of consciousness,

of knowledge and bliss; and in this they partake of the nature of God Himself. It is, however, necessary to note here that the idea of every soul being a part of God—the concept of *amśa*—has its own difficulties. Let us take a mass of matter, which is divisible into parts. If some of these parts are taken away, the original mass suffers diminution; it is so much less, proportionately. In looking upon the individual soul as an *amśa* of God, we must guard ourselves against being influenced by materialistic analogies of this kind.

You may remember the famous text, which I quoted from the *Upanishads* in one of our former classes:

पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुद्रिच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

"That is infinite: this is infinite. The infinite rises above and beyond the infinite. On taking the infinite out of the infinite, the infinite itself remains."

Here, as I have told you before, we may see a reference to two infinities, the visible universe and that other invisible world of indestructible immortality. You may remember, too, the memorable declaration in the *Purusha-Sūkta* that all this visible universe is only a fourth of the great *Purusha*, three-fourths of Him being immortal in Heaven. There, again, two infinities are referred to, and if we please, we may look upon the invisible infinite, which comprises three-fourths of the *Purusha*, as being greater than the visible universe, which contains only a fourth of Him. None the less, we are asked to look upon both as infinite; and we are also informed that if the infinite is taken out of the infinite, the infinite itself remains. The infinitude of God is such that nothing which we can take away from Him, so to say, will affect it in the least. An *amśa*, therefore, must be regarded as a part, which, when subtracted from the whole, does not affect it in the least. Every soul is a spark from the Divine, a part of the infinite God. Each part is to a very large extent an essential attribute of the whole; still, however numerous these parts may be and however essentially divine in nature, they do not tend, when taken away, to affect the infinity of the central whole. Please bear in mind that an *amśa* of God is a part of God in this special sense.

The advocates of the monistic school of the *Vedānta* understand the term, '*amśa*', in a different light. Śaṅkarāchārya in his commentary on the *śloka* points out that the Supreme *Brahman* cannot have any parts in a materialistic sense. The individual self is merely imagined to be a part on account of the influence of *avidyā*. It is a part of the *Brahman*, somewhat in the sense in which the reflection of the sun in a sheet of water is a part of the sun or the space within a jar is a part of the universal ether of space. On the removal of the limiting conditions that create the illusion of a part, the one indivisible unity remains. We may, if we please, speak of a part of the sun returning to its home when the sheet of water ceases to be and the reflection vanishes, or of a part of space uniting itself with the universal *ākāśa* when the jar is broken and the dividing walls of separation are destroyed. These are merely figurative ways of describing the great truth that nothing exists but the *Brahman* without a second. Here, too, is the full explanation of the statement that those who reach the supreme abode of the *Brahman* never return.

It is then stated that when an *amśa* of God in the shape of an individual soul is sent into this world to become incarnate, it draws to itself the *indriyas*, of which *manas* is the sixth. You are sure to remember that Indian psychology looks upon *manas*, which may be rendered in English as the faculty of attention, as constituting an *indriya*. It is further stated that all these *indriyas* appertain to *prakṛiti*. I believe I have discussed this question more than once in these classes. Consider the case of a blind man. He is suffering, not from a spiritual, but from a purely physical defect. His impaired power of perception is due to this bodily deficiency. It would be wrong to regard the blinding of the eye as implying a maiming of the soul. The lens of the eye, for instance, may have been rendered opaque by cataract; and when this is removed, the eye sees again. Similarly deafness, dumbness and other defects of the senses may be shown to be purely physical in character. They respond to physical treatment; they are cured by physical means. Otherwise, if for instance, blindness of the eye is due to some inborn malady of the soul, a person born blind must remain so till the end of his life. No physical treatment can force a response from the soul. If there is the possibility of one who, let us say, has lost his sight,

recovering his vision again through surgery or medication, then the inference is clear that he must have been suffering from some physiological malaise. The senses then are physical and physiological. They may be instruments of the soul; they may be door-ways of experience, the channels of knowledge in this world; but they do not appertain to the soul. They are of the earth, earthy; they belong to the flesh and not to the spirit.

शरीरं यदवाप्नोति यच्चाप्युत्क्रामतीश्वरः ।
गृहीत्वैतानि संयाति वायुर्गन्धानिवाशयात् ॥ ८ ॥

8. When the ruler (of the body) acquires or leaves a body, he goes on his way taking these (senses) with him, as the wind moves along taking away perfumes from their place.

The *amśa* of God which becomes the *jīva* in relation to embodiments in this visible universe, is spoken of here as *īśvara*, ruler, master. It is the *īśvara* of the body, wherein it dwells. This master of the body at one time takes up one body as its abode and another at a different time. There is a successive taking up and giving up of embodiments. In the history of each soul, we find births in different embodiments and deaths too therein. These bodies form, so to say, the passage of the soul in this universe. The passing of the soul through many 'births' and 'deaths' is like the passing of a breeze over a garden full of fragrant flowers. One may be a mile or two away from the garden; still, the breeze brings there the perfumes of flowers. And from the smell of the breeze, one can guess the nature of the flowers it meets on its way. It is also capable of losing that fragrance. If the breeze blows for a long time and over a great distance, its fragrance becomes disseminated. A stage may come when it may lose all the perfumes it acquired. Imagine the history of the soul to be like the passing of the breeze from place to place. In the course of its wanderings, the soul takes up body after body, dwells in each for a time, and then abandons it in the manner in which the breeze scents itself with many a perfume, carries each along with it a part of its way and then loses it.

The eminent commentator, Madhvāchārya, understands this *śloka* to relate to God. The word, '*iśvara*', of course, is generally used only in that sense. He writes that God, being the distributor of the fruits of *karma*, furnishes each soul with the senses and the body that it has merited by its past *karma*. The soul, by itself, does not possess the power to create embodiments for itself. It is only the Lord, who presides over the great law of *karma*, that can clothe the souls in flesh. This view also applies to the succeeding two or three verses, where something more is said about the *iśvara* referred to here. They must all be understood as treating of God and not of the soul.

श्रोत्रं चक्षुःस्पर्शनं च रसनं घ्राणमेव च ।
अधिष्ठाय मनश्चायं विषयानुपसेवते ॥ ९ ॥

9. And he enjoys the objects of the senses, presiding over the senses of vision, audition, touch, and smell and the mind also.

Śrī Kṛishṇa here declares that the soul which acquires an embodiment experiences the objects of this visible, perceptible universe by presiding over the six *indriyas*. This is a philosophic position of great importance. It opposes the view that knowledge is nothing but sensory response to external stimuli. The external world reacts on our senses in various ways. The ear hears sounds, the eye sees colour and form, the nose smells, the tongue tastes and the skin feels. It has been urged that, if we analyse our knowledge of things, we would find it to consist of sensations of hearing, seeing, smell, taste and touch. Experience on this view is nothing more than a haphazard collection of sensations, and consciousness is merely a by-product of material processes, reflecting within itself physical responses to external stimuli. But the view that Śrī Kṛishṇa puts forward here is radically different from this. He maintains that there is a *jīva* or soul in the body which feels the perceptions. It is a spark of the divine flame. Seated within the body, it experiences the objects of this universe through the instrumentality of the senses. The sensations flow within from outside. But by themselves they do not constitute the internal consciousness and mind of man. There is something seated within us independently and of its own accord; and it is

this soul or *jīva*, which makes it possible for the senses to operate as door-ways through which the perceptions of external objects are experienced. The reality of a soul within us is postulated here. It is also implied that the ultimate responsibility for all our experiences rests with the soul. Our very capacity to experience is due to our being endowed with souls.

It may well be asked: if the soul alone is responsible for our experience, then what is the good of the senses? What purpose do they serve? Why do we want eyes and ears, nose and tongue and skin? In reply to these questions, it must be noted that the sensory organs are conceived not so much as instruments of knowledge, but rather as weak and imperfect tools that limit the field of knowledge. The soul, in its state of freedom, possesses greater powers of knowledge than when it is immured within a body. The accomplished and successful *yogin* is a standing proof of the fact that the body places grave limitations on the powers of knowledge of the soul. Think of the soul in its state of freedom as a man standing in the midst of a wide plain, with his eyes free to travel from horizon to horizon. Then, suppose screens are built around him, confining the range of his vision. This would be a good similitude for the body, which limits the range of knowledge of the soul. The senses are like slits in the screen, affording fragmentary glimpses of the outside world. Suppose a man placed behind a screen sees through one slit therein red light, through another yellow light and so forth. The red or yellow light cannot be seen, if there is no 'seer' on the other side of the screen. Neither the slits in the screen nor the phenomena of the outside world can explain away the person who sees. And it would be clearly absurd to look upon him as consisting of red or yellow light. We are something more than bundles of sensations, brought into existence by the chance reactions between the outside world and our own sensory organs.

The complex relationship between the body and the soul can be understood only when we regard the soul as the dominant reality. The capacity to know and the power to experience are dependent on the essential nature of the soul; it is the soul that knows. What it knows from time to time is dependent on the physical organs of sense. The original freedom of the soul is lost

in its embodied condition. It is as though the soul was confined within the walls of a dark dungeon, with flashes of light creeping through cracks and crevices in the walls The knowledge which the soul gains through the senses is imperfect and limited knowledge. And the fact that it is knowledge which the senses provide us with and not a chaotic stream of sensations demonstrates to us the directing and unifying function of the soul. It is both *bhoktṛi* and *jñātṛi*, the enjoyer and the knower; it presides over the senses and makes use of them for perceiving the objects of the external world.

उत्क्रामन्तं स्थितं वापि भुञ्जानं वा गुणान्वितम् ।
विमूढा नानुपश्यन्ति पश्यन्ति ज्ञानचक्षुषः ॥ १० ॥

10. The deluded do not perceive (the soul), departing from or staying (in a body), experiencing or in association with the *guṇas* (of *prakṛiti*). They see, who have the eye of wisdom.

Foolish people do not recognise the existence of the soul, even though it is seated within every being in the universe, and even though they themselves could have no experience or knowledge, but for their being endowed with souls. Every moment of our lives, we are having some experience or other; and the agent in every experience is a soul. Memory, the unity of consciousness, the need for a background to our perceptions, these facts of our conscious life constitute the bases for a belief in the existence of the soul. Even if these are ignored, the phenomenon of death must bring home to our minds the existence of an enlivening, experiencing agent whose departure brings about physical mortality. To those who may not be swayed by these arguments, yet another way of considering this question remains. In the last chapter, we learnt a good deal about the relations between the soul and the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. We saw that the soul becomes associated with the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* when it is incarnate. And this association with different *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* gives rise to various mental and moral tendencies. The experience of one who is predominantly under the influence of the *sattva-guṇa* will differ markedly from the experience of one who is swayed by any of the other two *guṇas*. From this too,

we ought to be able to draw some conclusions regarding the reality of the soul. If the body is the sole reality, why is it that the experience of one body is different from that of another? Neither physiological nor chemical analysis can provide us with an answer to this question. It is only when we recognise that something other than the body is in association with the body, that we can learn a little about such products of their interaction as the divergent mental and moral tendencies of men.

All these considerations are ignored by those who deny the existence of the soul; and in the opinion of Śrī Kṛishṇa, it is stark stupidity to maintain such a view. Over and above arguments like these, there remains the proof of direct experience for the existence of the soul. Of that, Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to speak :

यतन्तो योगिनश्चैनं पश्यन्त्यात्मन्यवस्थितम् ।
यतन्तोऽप्यकृतात्मानो नैनं पश्यन्त्यचेतसः ॥ ११ ॥

11. *Yogins*, ever striving, see it abiding in themselves. But, try as they may, those with minds undisciplined and destitute of (the highest powers of) consciousness do not see it.

Some clue is here given about that eye of wisdom by means of which one may see the soul. It may be acquired by the practice of *yoga*. As you are aware, our thinkers have held that the experience of the *yogin* in the state of *samādhi* affords the most emphatic evidence in favour of the reality of the soul. In the state of *samādhi*, the *yogin* is so fully absorbed in self-awareness as to be utterly oblivious of the external world. The door-ways of his senses are barred ; the slits in the screen are closed ; there is no loop-hole, through which the external world can act on the *yogin*. Even his memory is not allowed to play on any past experience of his. If the contents of our consciousness are resolvable merely into a bundle of sensations, the mind of the *yogin* in the state of *samādhi* must be dark and void, contentless and unaware of itself. Since, as a matter of fact, we have ample testimony to prove that the *yogin* in such a state does not lose the experience of his own reality, we have to hold that consciousness consists of

something more than sensations, that there is a soul which forms a necessary background to our sensations. It is the bed on which the stream of sensations runs, the canvas on which our senses are painting their pictures. The seer behind the screen is conscious of himself even when the slits are all closed, because he is something other than what he sees through the slits. It is the function of the soul to feel these bundles of sensations that constitute our experiences. It is the experiencer of experiences, and being so, is necessarily different from the experiences themselves.

Thus *yoga* enables us to realise the reality of our own souls. It furnishes the most conclusive evidence of a knowing and experiencing principle within us by the experience of self-introspection. Mere argumentation, however subtle, cannot lead us to the truth in regard to questions like these. We will derive little good from any examination of Śrī Kṛishṇa's teaching merely out of dialectic curiosity. You may all know the story of the blind men who tried to describe an elephant. One of them touched its legs and thought that the elephant was something like a pillar; another felt the tail and believed that the animal was something like a broom and so forth. Reasoning and argument can only afford us stray glimpses of the soul. To try to realise the soul through reasoning is something like trying to understand the elephant by the sense of touch. Unless our eyes are opened by the dazzling light of actual experience, we cannot have any adequate knowledge of the nature of our souls.

Those who have thus cured themselves of their spiritual blindness are here described as *kṛitātmānaḥ*; their minds are disciplined. Those who are otherwise, are *akṛitatmānaḥ*, men of untrained and undisciplined minds; in consequence, they are *achetasaḥ*, destitute of consciousness. They can be called conscious only by courtesy, since they do not manifest the highest powers of consciousness and realise the reality of their own souls. Strive as they may, they cannot succeed in the quest of realising the nature of their souls, for that realisation comes only through an illumining experience for which one has to qualify oneself by a rigid discipline of the head and the heart. Except through that experience, one cannot see the soul. It is to be sought not

through the intellect alone but through the whole of our being. Thus only can one gain the eye of wisdom, right vision and insight into truth.

यदादित्यगतं तेजो जगद्भासयतेऽखिलम् ।
यच्चन्द्रमसि यच्चाग्नौ तत्तेजो विद्धि मामकम् ॥ १२ ॥

12. That splendour which, being in the sun, lights up the whole world, that which is in the moon and that which is in fire, know that splendour to be Mine.

Sometime back we tried to understand the exact significance of the term, '*amśa*'. It means generally a part, but when we say that the soul is an *amśa* of God, we must not conceive the relation in any materialistic manner. The finite self is a part of the infinite, and being so, it is a part which, when taken away from the whole, does not affect the latter. With the object of guarding us against material analogies in dealing with God and His relations with the world, Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to teach that He is the source and fountain of all light in the universe.

Modern astronomy tells us that the light of the moon is derived from the sun, and Hindu astronomy, by the way, is also aware of this. Now, we have to ask ourselves: Does the moon, because its light is derived from that of the sun, take away a part of the radiance of the sun? Or again, if the moon does not shine, will the sun shine any the better? Let us look at another similar phenomenon. Suppose there is a dark room whose walls consist of mirrors. Introduce therein an electric lamp. All the mirrors will reflect the light of the lamp and shine. Their light is dependent on the light of the lamp. But here, again, we may ask: Do the mirrors deprive the glowing electric bulb of part of its light? Will it shine any the better, if there are no mirrors? We may understand from examples like these that light derived from some source does not diminish the power of the centre.

In a similar way. God is the centre of all light, whether light is understood in a physical or a figurative sense. But for Him, the great luminaries of the universe would be dark and dull; but for Him, too, the feeling and thinking beings in the universe would

not feel and think. All their experiences, all their feelings of pain and pleasure, all their knowledge of truth, everything, in short, which these centres of consciousness can and do feel, all these proceed from Him. The souls have the capacity to experience, because they are parts of Him who is consciousness itself. And the sun, the moon and fire serve as centres of light, because they too are parts of Him who is the fountain of all light. But both the souls and these sources of physical light are parts of an infinite whole; they are parts which, when removed, do not cause the whole to suffer any diminution.

In the following two *ślokas*, Śri Krishṇa points out the intimate relationship between God, who is the centre and source of all light and life and consciousness, and the various beings in the universe.

गामाविश्य च भूतानि धारयाम्यहमोजसा ।
पुष्णामि चौषधीस्सर्वास्सोमो भूत्वा रसात्मकः ॥ १३ ॥

13. Entering the earth, I sustain all beings by My power. Becoming the moon, full of *rasa*, I nourish all plants.

Every one of you ought to be familiar by now with the idea that the order of the universe is conceived in the *Gītā* to be maintained by God, who permeates, penetrates and controls all things. By the term, '*gau*', which has been translated as the earth, we have to understand here a reference to the whole visible universe, the *prapañcha*, as they say in Sanskrit. Having stated that the whole universe is intimately pervaded and continually sustained by God, Śrī Kṛishṇa cites some striking illustrations in support of His theme. Through the moon, He declares, He nourishes all plant life. In Sanskrit, the moon is often spoken of as the lord of plants *(oshadīśa)* in the belief that some mysterious lunar influence is responsible for the circulation of sap in plants. The verdict of modern science has not yet been delivered on this view, but it seems probable that there is some justification for this opinion. The term, '*rasa*', which I have left untranslated, is rich in significance and may bear any one of a number of meanings in this context. 'Sap' is a plausible translation, and it is that view which I have just put forward. Śrī Rāmānujā interprets

the term as the essence of nectar, the lunar rays often being looked upon as nectarine. Śri Śaṅkara explains that the moon is the home of all essences and that it nourishes all plants by interpenetrating them with its own essences.

The underlying idea, however, is clear, whichever view we may prefer. Plant life is nourished by God; He influences its innermost vital centres. Plants, like men and animals and stocks and stones, are parts of that Tremendous Whole whose physical frame is the entire universe of matter and energy; and being so, they have no life and energy apart from what they have derived from God.

अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः ।
प्राणापानसमायुक्तः पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम् ॥ १४ ॥

14. Having become the fire of digestion, I become associated with the bodies (lit. body) of (all) living creatures, and united with the in-going and out-going breaths, I cause the digestion of the four kinds of food.

This *śloka* is also intended to teach us the intimacy of the relation between the power of God and the power which our lives and souls manifest in relation to our bodies. The expression, '*vaiśvanāra*', which has to be understood as the digestive fire in this context, means literally that which pertains to all men. The power to digest food is an important and characteristic attribute of life. By the identification of this power with God, we are taught that it is the breath of God which has endowed all beings with life and soul. Every soul is a part of God, a spark of the Divine Flame. Seated within the various beings in the universe, the souls are the experiencers of all the experiences. It may seem, as though the various souls that animated all beings in the universe had become separate and distinct from God and free from His control. To guard us against arriving at this erroneous conclusion, Śri Kṛishṇa definitely tells us that they are all under the guidance of God, constantly influenced by Him in His capacity as *antaryāmin*.

One or two small points in this verse may need some explanation. The terms '*prāṇa*', and '*apāna*', mean respectively the breath

which is inhaled and the breath which is exhaled. As you are all aware, respiration is responsible for the very maintenance of life, and it is needless to point out that the 'fire' of digestion is lit by the energy that arises out of our respiration. The four kinds of food that are mentioned here are explained by the commentators to be those that could be masticated, drunk, sucked and swallowed. The intention is to include all kinds of food that are eaten by the various beings in the universe. The power to eat food and digest it is a characteristic attribute of life, and from the amoeba to man, all varieties of life 'eat' in some way and 'digest' in some manner. This vital function is here traced to the power of God Himself.

Let us conclude here our work for today.

lxvi

Last time we were studying a description of the characteristics of One who will presently be designated as the *Uttama Purusha*. We saw how He is the internal controller of everything in this universe. We were also reminded by forceful examples of the theme of the tenth chapter, that whatever has beauty or power in this universe derives all its excellence and value from the *Parama Purusha*, who is the source and fountain of all light and power. This is summed up in the *śloka* with which we have to begin our work today.

सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टो मत्तस्स्मृतिर्ज्ञानमपोहनं च ।
वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यो वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहम् ॥ १५ ॥

15. And I am placed in the hearts (lit. heart) of all. From Me (come) memory, knowledge and their loss also. I alone am to be known from all the *Vedas*. I am the author of the *Vedānta*, and I alone am the knower of the *Veda*.

I remember to have spoken in these classes more than once on the light that is thrown by the phenomenon of memory on the reality of the soul. Memory has been regarded in this country as a kind of *samskāra*—an impression which experience of any kind

leaves on the soul. From this it follows that, but for the existence of the soul and its unifying power, there would be no such thing as memory. We will do well to bestow a little thought on this question. The necessity for the postulation of a soul has been questioned by many acute thinkers, arguing from many standpoints. The external world may be resolved into a bundle of actual and potential sensations, and our consciousness into a continual stream of ideas and sensations. Analysis, having come so far, must pause before the residual phenomenon of memory, the recurrent state of one and the same mental condition, asserting a mysterious thread of unity in the midst of apparent diversity.

Take the question of recognition. The classical example for the process of recognition is given in Sanskrit thus: *So'yaṁ Devadattaḥ*, he is that Devadatta. This person, whom I now see before me, is that same Devadatta whom I saw some time ago. That is how recognition comes to our minds, and you can easily see how memory is fundamentally involved here. The impress of memory of the Devadatta whom I saw before is compared with the direct perception of the Devadatta who now stands before me; and when the impress of memory is seen to be the same as the impression of direct perception, I say that the Devadatta whom I now see is that same Devadatta whom I saw before. Now, how can such a feeling of recognition arise, unless what perceives Devadatta now is the same as that on which the impress of a former perception of Devadatta was left? As Śaṅkarāchārya observes in his famous *bhāshya* on the *Brahma-Sūtras*: "Remembrance can take place only if it belongs to the same person who previously made the perception. For what one man has experienced is not remembered by another man. How, indeed, could there arise the conscious state that I now see what I saw before, if the seeing person were not the same in both

If the mind is nothing but a fleeting stream of sensations and ideas, brought into existence by the random contacts between the senses and the so-called external world, where is there any place for any feeling of recognition? The fact that we have this power of recognition leads the Indian psychologist to infer that the bearer of the former perception of Devadatta is the same as the receiver

of the present perception of Devadatta. Memory, in other words, furnishes striking testimony in favour of the existence of a permanent, enduring knower and experiencer within every one of us. The varying contents of consciousness, indeed, prove its uniform and invariable existence. We have to posit a permanent background for consciousness in the midst of fleeting contents. The objection that, as consciousness deals only with discrete phenomena, we are not and cannot be conscious of a connected flow of consciousness, has been met by the argument that as the lamp, bright though it is, requires an intellectual agent, furnished with instruments such as the eye, for itself to become manifest, even so the mental state requires an intelligent inner principle to make itself manifest.

Having arrived at the reality of the soul in this manner, we may ask: What is its nature? The answer to this question, in brief, is that the soul is the knowing and experiencing agent within every conscious being in the universe. This is less a fact of direct experience than an inference from the facts of conscious life. To understand the real nature of an object is to clothe it with attributes, and these attributes can be no other than the impression that we receive of the object through our senses. And of the soul, we can predicate no such attributes. We cannot ascribe to it form or colour, sound or smell. Nor can it be tasted or touched. It is beyond the range of our senses. And our intuitive contact with it leads us to its presence and not to its knowledge. It is thus only as a matter of inference that we must learn of the reality and nature of the knowing and experiencing entity within us, which makes us subject to pleasures and pains and which makes us move and act, perceive, think and enjoy.

The question now remains: What is its origin? In reply, we are taught in this chapter that this soul, whose reality is proved by the existence of memory, is a part of God Himself. It is, therefore, easy to understand how memory and knowledge and their disappearance as well are due to Him. The power that we have to know, to remember and to recognise is derived from the Lord Himself. It is because we are all infinitesimal parts of the one fountain of all light and wisdom, sparks from the Flame Divine, that we possess consciousness, knowledge and memory.

So much is clear. But some of you may wonder why the loss of these also should be traced directly to the Lord. This doubt has, indeed, led to an alternative interpretation of the word, '*apohana*', as merely' '*ūhana*', that is, knowledge by way of reasoning and inference. But it is also possible to understand '*apohana*' as loss or removal, and yet give a reasonable explanation of the stanza we are at present considering. It is notorious that many memories are undesirable and many kinds of knowledge lead us to ruin. *Smṛiti* is a kind of *samskāra*, and it naturally gives rise to tendencies to think and act. Our experiences determine our tendencies to thought and action and shape our characters. It is thus clear that only such *smṛiti* is desirable as is conducive to the creation of good tendencies. We have to get rid of all memories that lead us towards wickedness and obliterate from our minds all knowledge that gives rise to evil propensities. Only then can we attain the natural heritage of our souls. The term, '*apohana*', may, therefore, be understood as the absence of undesirable knowledge and undesirable *smṛiti*. And just as the acquisition of desirable knowledge and *smṛiti* is due to Him, whose parts we all are, the absence of undesirable *jñāna* and *smṛiti* are also due to Him. In other words, an unseen Power shapes our ends and directs our destinies.

Many of you may know the famous declaration in the *Upanishads* that the Lord is not to be attained through thinking or meditation or stored-up learning, but that He reveals Himself only to those whom He desires to favour (*Kaṭhopanishad*, I. ii. 23). This does not mean that we have to abandon all endeavour and effort and remain passive in the belief that if we are fated to attain the emancipation of *moksha*, God will surely lead us to it. The point that we have to grasp is that in any attempts that we may make to realise God, our success depends more on Him than on ourselves. We can succeed in our quest only if He chooses to reveal Himself to us. After all, as I pointed out to you once before, our faults are so many and our weaknesses so numerous that none has any right to claim, as something won or achieved, the great boon of salvation. It is a gift from the Lord, presented to those on whom He looks with a gracious eye. How and why God bestows His grace on anyone is a problem which we cannot solve. The guiding motives of God can be understood only by

one who is greater than God. It is, however, enough for us to know that we must not ascribe to ourselves the credit for any success that may reward our efforts in seeking self-realisation and God-realisation. For, if it were not for His graciousness, His readiness to reveal Himself to us, failure must greet us at the end of our toil. Whatever power of success and achievement that we may have, comes to us from Him who is the source and centre of all power.

It is thus that the *smṛiti* and the *jñāna* necessary to endow us with desirable tendencies and impulses and to lead us onward to God are His gifts ; and it is thus, too, that such *smṛiti* and *jñāna* as may hinder us in our great quest are removed by His grace. For has He not promised, out of His abounding grace, to destroy the darkness of ignorance and illumine our minds with the shining light of knowledge, so as to lead us on to the salvation of soul-emancipation and God-attainment? (X. 10 & 11).

We may now proceed to consider the statement that the Lord alone is to be known from all the *Vedas*. This does not indicate merely a unity of theme in all the *Vedas*. I feel that something more comprehensive is intended to be taught here. There is no harm in understanding the term, '*Veda*', here to mean Divine Revelation in general. And it would be quite in keeping with the spirit of boundless tolerance that pervades the teachings of the *Gītā*. You may remember that Śrī Kṛishṇa has more than once told us that all religions have Him for their goal, whether wittingly or unwittingly, and that all the rewards earned by all kinds of worshippers are bestowed on them by His gracious favour. If we believe in the ultimate oneness of God, and if we further believe that all forms of religion and worship are either knowingly or unknowingly directed towards Him, then there will be no difficulty in understanding how the term, '*Veda*', may be endowed with a more comprehensive significance, so that the Allah of the Moslems, the Jehovah of the Jews, the Father in Heaven of the Christians and the God of gods of the Hindus cease to be diverse and distinct and become the one and only object of all scriptural revelation the world over. Whatever may be the nature, the channel and the language of Revelation, the one and only God is the theme. Owing to perversity and ignorance, we

forget the great truth that all religions have a striking unity of objective and wage ruinous, internecine wars. Though history is dark with the blood that religious intolerance and bigotry have shed, all religions chant the same refrain. The Lord is the theme of all their messages, the burden of all their songs. There is thus no difficulty in giving a special significance to the term, '*Veda*', here, seeing that the more comprehensive meaning is demanded by the spirit of gracious charity and generous tolerance that permeates the teachings of the *Gītā*.

Śri Krishṇa then declares that He is both *Vedānta-kṛit* and *Veda-vit*, the author of the *Vedānta* as well as the knower of the *Veda*. It is a fair inference that in the opinion of Śrī Kṛishṇa the subject of the *Veda* cannot be far different from that of the *Vedānta*. At least, one school of Indian thought does not accept this view. The *Pūrva-mīmāmsakas* hold that the object of the *Vedas* is to enable us to perform various sacrifices in the correct manner and attain the results that accrue therefrom. If that be the case, the *Veda-vit* need not necessarily be the *Vedānta-kṛit*. There is no need for the *Mīmāmsaka*, who is primarily interested in the performance of sacrifices, to postulate a fundamental reality like God, commanding our worship and adoration. He takes an interest almost wholly empirical and practical in discussions on the nature of the divine. It is argued that the gods are those who are offered oblations in the sacrifices and that there is no necessity to pursue further any inquiries about them. Our sole duty is to perform the various sacrifices correctly. At a time when ritualism of this kind was dominant in our land, something which may be called a grammatical definition of God was formulated. Many of you may know that every *Vedic* verse is believed to have been spoken in praise of some god or other; there is a *devatā* for every *mantra*. And the *devatā* was once defined as something, which is connoted by a word that, being in the dative case, governed the formula of oblation, *svāhā*, in the *mantra*.

The *Vedāntin* views the problem in an entirely different light. The performance of sacrifices is secondary to considerations of overwhelming importance such as the nature and attributes of Godhead and our duty to God and to the world in which our lot

is cast. The religion of sacrifices is one among many religions. It is a pathway to salvation, so long as those who follow it realise that all religions tend to the worship of the one and only God of the *Vedānta* and offer disinterested homage to Him. It is, therefore, said that the *Mīmāmsaka* is like one who has voluntarily closed one of his eyes; he refuses to survey the whole of the problem before him. He does not care to ask who these gods are to whom sacrifices are offered and how they happen to possess the powers attributed to them. It is enough for him that the performers of sacrifices are assured various celestial pleasures. The *Mīmāmsaka* has a theory that every religious rite brings into existence something which goes by the name of *apūrva* and which in due time bestows the promised rewards. He declines to inquire what this *apūrva* is and how it is brought into existence.

But even if we are interested only in the purely ceremonial aspect of the *Vedas*, questions of this kind cannot be completely avoided. We may learn that the performance of a particular sacrifice is for the satisfaction of a particular god, say, Indra or Varuṇa or Agni. At the same time, we also know that the performance of the sacrifice gives rise to a certain *apūrva* which in due course will bring us the rewards sought for. Now, it is easy to see that between the production of the *apūrva* and the satisfaction of Indra or Varuṇa or Agni, there must be some close connection. We are, indeed, compelled to infer that whatever god is satisfied by a sacrifice must be at the root of the production of the *apūrva* which its performance gives rise to. In other words, that god possesses a certain specific power, which ultimately bestows various rewards to various worshippers in accordance with the sacrifices they have performed. How does he possess this power? This is a crucial question, and we cannot avoid it, if we go into the matter sufficiently deeply. The *Mīmāmsaka*, however, avoids it; he slurs over and evades the issues raised by it. That is why he can be said to have understood the *Veda* only partially. He understands the details of the rituals, but knows little about their purport. He is wilfully blind of one eye. If both his eyes are open, he cannot help coming to the same conclusion as the *Vedāntin*, namely, that all religious worship is directed knowingly or unknowingly to the one and only God, who is both immanent and transcendent at the same time.

It is in this way that we have to understand the close unity of theme between the *Veda* and the *Vedānta*. The implications and presuppositions on which the *Veda* bases its prayers and rites are explained in the *Vedānta*, which, indeed, means literally the end or the aim of the *Veda*. If our study of the *Veda* is sufficiently thorough and complete, if we study the question not merely as the *Mīmāmsaka* does nor again only from the historical and critical standpoints, but include within the scope of our survey the significance, purpose and philosophy of the various sacrifices prescribed, then it will inevitably be seen that the knower of the *Veda* is also the author of the *Vedānta*.

In declaring Himself as the author of the *Vedānta*, Śrī Kṛishṇa very probably desires us to understand that He is among the prominent teachers of the *Vedānta*. Tradition assigns the authorship of the *Vedānta-sūtras* to Vyāsa. Modern scholars feel some difficulties in subscribing to this view. We may, however, hold tentatively that Vyāsa might have been the original propounder of a school of thought which later acquired the name of the *Vedānta*. Now, there is also another tradition concerning Vyāsa to the effect that he was the arranger of the *Vedas*. The word, 'Vyāsa', itself means in Sanskrit arranger or compiler. It is believed that the *Vedas* were not divided into the four books that are now known to us before Vyāsa carried out the great classification. Four different kinds of priests, it is said, were associated with the performance of sacrifices from remote antiquity, the *hotṛi*, the *adhvaryu*, the *udgātṛi* and the *brahman*. Each of the first three groups had a specific revelational literature, on which they based the part they had to play in the sacrifices. And this literature was handed down from teacher to pupil, from generation to generation.

But there was no regular arrangement and classification of the traditionally revealed literature connected with the religion of the *Vedas* before the time of Vyāsa. He gathered together the sacred literature of the *hotṛi* priests and called it the *Ṛig-veda*. In a similar way, the literature of the *adhvaryu* priests became the *Yajur-veda*, and that of the *udgātṛi* priests was styled the *Sāma-veda*. Side by side with these, there was another body of religious literature, which was apparently derived in the same manner

traditionally from time immemorial and which, though it had little to do with sacrifices, had still a great deal to do with the religious life of the people. This was all gathered together separately by Vyāsa, and it became the *Atharva-veda*. Here we have a rough account of the way in which Vyāsa is said to have arranged the *Vedas*. Those who have an internal acquaintance with the subject will know that the arrangement of the *Vedas* must have required on the part of Vyāsa a complete mastery of the contents of each of the four *Vedas*. He must certainly have been a *Veda-vit*. And as Vyāsa is also credited by tradition to have been the founder of the school of philosophy and religion known as the *Vedānta*, we have some further support for the statement that the *Veda-vit* and the *Vedānta-kṛit* are both one and the same.

Yet another point of interest is the suggestion made that Śrī Kṛishṇa, by calling Himself *Vedānta-kṛit*, probably meant that there would be no Revelation after Him. The term, '*Vedānta*', literally means the end of the *Vedas*. And interpreted in that sense, Śrī Kṛishṇa must be understood to say that He was the maker of the end of the *Vedas*, that the Revelation was complete with the teaching that He gave. This does not necessarily imply that succeeding ages would be dark without the light of Revelation, but it certainly means that the fullest account of the purpose of God and the duty of man may be found in the teachings of Śrī Kṛishṇa. The suggestion may also be taken note of, that, if Śrī Kṛishṇa, having been the knower of the *Veda*, became also the author of the *Vedānta*, then it must be that the *Vedānta* is the culmination, the ripe fruit of the teachings of the *Veda*. The *Vedānta*, in short, is the fulfilment of the *Veda*.

In the four *ślokas* that still remain to be discussed, Śrī Kṛishṇa summarises all that we have been taught so far in this chapter. The first of these reads as follows:

द्वाविमौ पुरुषौ लोके क्षरश्चाक्षर एव च ।
क्षरस्सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थोऽक्षर उच्यते ॥ १६ ॥

16. There are two *purushas* in the world, the destructible and the indestructible. The destructible (*purusha* consists of) all beings, (while) the indestructible one is spoken of as being above the universe.

Opinions differ widely as to the interpretation of the word, '*purusha*', in this *śloka*. In the wide and varied philosophical literature in Sanskrit, the term invariably means something which is contradistinguished from *prakṛiti*. Of the two terms, '*pṛakriti*' and '*purusha*', each is always understood in the light of the other. *Prakṛiti* and *purusha* constitute a contrasting pair of opposites, like matter and mind in Western metaphysics. Bearing this in mind, we may try to understand the distinction between the indestructible and the destructible *purusha*. You are well aware of the fact that a philosophical analysis of the universe leads us to the postulation of at least two entities as the basic factors thereof, the principle of consciousness and something which is of itself dull, inert and immobile, but is actuated and vivified by consciousness. The former, which we may call soul or mind, goes by the name of *purusha*; the latter, which is generally spoken of as matter, is styled *prakṛiti*. It is of the very nature of the soul, as we have been taught, to be immutable and immortal, while the physical universe is subject to change, decay and death From the standpoint of metaphysics, the material universe is conceived to be mortal, because it is subject to mutation and changes of state, and not because its ultimate annihilation is posited. It is also to be borne in mind that *prakṛiti* and *purusha* are almost invariably found in intimate association with each other. The entire universe consists of embodied souls. Now, looking at the soul from the standpoint of its embodiment, which is subject to destruction, we may consider the embodied soul as being subject to change and hence as destructible. It is born with every embodiment within which it is encased, and it dies too along with such embodiments. But of itself, the soul is free from mutation and change, is eternal and indestructible.

Here is a way in which we may look upon the *purusha* as both *kshara* and *akshara*, mortal and immortal. And this point of view is not entirely unfamiliar to you, seeing that the attainment of *moksha* is often spoken of in the *Gītā* as the attainment of immortality of the soul. This means, as I have more than once explained to you, not that the soul in the bondage of *karma* is mortal but that it may be figuratively conceived to be subject to birth, growth, decay and death in the embodiments it enters from time to time. In this sense, the soul which is bound to the

chariot-wheels of *samsāra*, is mortal and destructible; while the emancipated soul, having attained its original freedom, is doubly immortal, by virtue of its own nature and by virtue, too, of its freedom from association with anything which is mortal. In this manner, we may classify the souls into two groups, those that are *baddha*, imprisoned in material embodiments, and those that are *mukta*, free from all bondage.

In the light of this classification, it will be easy for us to understand the statement that all the beings in the world constitute the destructible *purusha*, while the indestructible one is *kūṭastha*, above the universe of ceaseless change. The *Vedāntin*, as you know well, looks on the whole universe as being pervaded and animated by the principle of consciousness. Nothing appears in his eyes as wholly dead. He sees the whole universe throbbing and pulsating with life, radiant with the light of consciousness. You may remember in this connection the important discoveries of Professor Bose, to which I have drawn your attention more than once and which seem to bridge in a material manner the apparent gulf between the living and the non-living. There can, therefore, be no difficulty in grasping the significance of the statement that all the beings in the world constitute the destructible *purusha*. As every being in the universe is animated by consciousness, all the beings in the world represent embodied consciousness. And the soul, in its embodied condition, may well be spoken of as the destructible *purusha*. The indestructible *purusha*, that is, the soul in its state of freedom, is described as *kūṭastha*. This word, as you are well aware, bears many meanings. It appears to me appropriate to interpret it in this context as high above *prakṛiti*, transcendent. Look on the entire universe as a lofty mountain. And imagine the emancipated soul as standing on its highest peak with the whole world spread down at its feet. Such would be the relation between the soul which is freed of all bondage to *karma* and the world of matter. Standing above the world, free of all association with *prakṛiti*, the enfranchised soul is immutable and immortal.

Śaṅkarāchārya appears to understand the term, '*purusha*', in this *śloka* in the somewhat unusual sense of 'entity'. The universe, in his view, is made up of two entities, one destructible

and the other indestructible. All the beings in the world, being subject to change, are destructible. The indestructible entity is the *māyā-śakti* of the Lord, the wonderful illusive power or energy which is the cause of *samsāra* and which keeps the world going. This power is eternal and indestructible, as *samsāra* is beginningless and eternal. And it is *kūṭastha*, because it is changeless like a mass of rocks and boulders that make up a mountain. Or again, the term, '*kūṭastha*', may also mean something which manifests itself in various forms of illusion and deception. According to Madhvāchārya, all the beings of the world collectively may be spoken of as destructible, because each of them inhabits different bodies at different times. The unchangeable, indestructible entity is *prakṛiti*. In whatever way we may understand the *kshara* and the *akshara purusha*, it is evident that no analysis which has come only thus far can be complete. Over and above matter and mind, the emancipated and the embodied soul, there is something which lies at the basis of all existence. And of this, Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to speak :

उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः परमात्मेत्युदाहृतः ।
यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य बिभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः ॥ १७ ॥

17. But other (than these) is the Highest *Purusha*, called the Supreme Soul, who, as the eternal Lord, supports the three worlds, having entered them.

The *Uttama Purusha* is different from the *kshara* and the *akshara purusha*, as neither of these latter can be spoken of as the *Paramātman*. The soul, whether bound or free, cannot be called supreme. It is always called the *jīvātman*; it is the finite self, and it is inferior in power and prestige to the Supreme Soul. The Supreme Being is called *purusha* and *ātman*, because He stands in the same relation to this universe of matter and mind as the soul stands to its embodiment. He is the soul of the universe, because He pervades it, gives it unity and coherence, and sustains it as the source and centre of all power and energy. And His support is not external but internal. Having entered into the three worlds, He sustains them from within as the *antaryāmin*, the internal controller. His pervasion of the universe places no

limitations on His power or freedom. For He remains always the transcendent Lord of the universe.

The significance of the word, '*anya*', in this *śloka* has given rise to some differences of opinion among the different schools of *Vedāntic* thought. The controversies centre round the point: How far and in what manner is God different from the individual soul? Some hold that the use of the word, '*anya*', here implies a sharp distinction between God, who is spoken of here, and the entities described in the previous verse. More particularly, it is maintained that God and the finite self are essentially different from each other. Another view is that we need not believe in any such fundamental distinction between the two. The soul and God are essentially alike, but there is a difference, shall we say, of state. God is free from all limitations; the soul suffers from a few of them. And it is this difference in condition which justifies the use of the word, '*anya*'. And this difference of opinion leads to a corresponding difference of opinion on the exact significance of the supremacy attributed to the Lord in the expression, '*Paramātman*'. The three important schools of *Vedānta* have their several views on this question, these being determined by fundamental philosophical positions taken in regard to the relation between God and the universe. According as we regard the universe as an indescribable manifestation of the wonderful power of God, or as the embodiment of God, or as the dominion of God, our ideas of divine supremacy will vary.

यस्मात्क्षरमतीतोऽहमक्षरादपि चोत्तमः ।
अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥ १८ ॥

18. Because I transcend the destructible *(purusha)* and (am) also higher than the indestructible *(purusha)*, therefore am I celebrated in the world and in the *Veda* as the Supreme Person.

Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to explain why He is designated as the *Uttama Purusha*, after having taught us the significance of the word, '*Paramātman*', in the last verse. Emphasis was laid there on the immanence of the Lord. To be the soul of the universe, He must intimately interpenetrate it. Now we are being told that

equal stress must be laid on His transcendence as well. Even though He pervades this universe of matter and mind, no limitations bind Him. He is, so to say, unattached to the universe. At the same time that He pervades it, He also transcends it. He pervades every *jīva* in the manner in which the *jīvas* pervade every material thing in the universe. If the *jīva* is the soul of material embodiments, He is the soul of the *jīva*. While thus pervading the *jīvas* and their material embodiments as well, He is not subject to any limitations from which they may suffer. In this manner, He transcends both *prakṛiti* and *purusha*, and is, therefore, justly celebrated as the *Purushottama*, or the Highest *Purusha*. The *mukta-jīva* may be superior to the *baddha-jīva*, but the Lord towers above them all. We may note in passing that the word, '*loka*', has also been glossed as *smṛiti*; in which case Śrī Kṛishṇa must be understood to declare that He is celebrated as *Purushottama* both in the *śruti* and in the *smṛiti*, the revealed scriptures and the sacred literature based thereon.

यो मामेवमसम्मूढो जानाति पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
स सर्वविद्भजति मां सर्वभावेन भारत ॥ १९ ॥

19. Whoever, being free from all delusion, understands Me thus to be the Highest *Purusha*,—he, knowing all, worships Me in all states of mind.

The logic in this *śloka* must be clearly noted. Śrī Kṛishṇa's reasons for declaring Himself the *Paramātman* and the *Purushottama* have been given in brief in the last verse of the fourteenth chapter. He is the Supreme Being, because He is the *pratishṭhā* of everything in the universe, of *prakṛiti*, of the world of indestructible immortality that appertains to the soul, of the everlasting rule of righteousness and of the divine bliss which is the portion of those who are delivered from the toils of *samsāra*. And it is thus because any serious attempt to understand the universe leads us to analyse it into three ultimate constituents: matter, soul and God. If we endeavour to understand the interrelations among these three analytical postulates of human thought, we will arrive at the conclusion that matter is subordinate to spirit or soul and that both these are subordinate to God, who

is the supporter and sustainer of everything in the worlds of matter and of mind. It is stated here that one who knows what has been set forth above, knows all. In other words, the implications of the position taken up yield a complete and satisfactory philosophical system.

To look on the soul as being superior to matter implies that matter is guided and prompted by the soul when the latter becomes associated with any physical embodiment. All the processes of development and change and growth in the world cannot be fortuitous or haphazard; they must be the result of purposive direction and guidance from the principle of consciousness which, we have every reason to believe, is all-pervading. If the causal position in biological evolution is assigned to variation in function, rather than variation in structure of the different organs of various forms of life, then the whole process of universal evolution may be easily seen to be teleological. It is, of course, true that scientists are divided on the question as to whether variation in structure or variation in function is the cause of evolutional development. The interdependence of variation in structure and variation in function in the life of organisms is fully recognised on all hands. While it may not be possible to pronounce a decisive opinion on the point at issue, it is open to us to urge some considerations to show that the position of the *Vedānta* and the Sāṅkhya is not fanciful or untenable. Consider the question of formation of habits, for instance. A habit is said to be formed when an action which was once voluntary becomes involuntary. This may well lead to a change in the structure of some physiological organ or other. Here is an example of the way in which consciousness affects matter. Facts like these have led Indian thinkers to declare that the process of evolution is directed for the good of the soul. In the opinion of the Sāṅkhya philosophers, the emancipation of the spirit is the goal of universal evolution; and this view is fully endorsed by the *Vedānta*. The soul, imprisoned in matter, struggles to regain its freedom. The ceaseless play of change that we see all around us is the result of the attempts of the soul to liberate itself.

Now, let us picture to ourselves the entire universe of matter and mind as being the body of the Supreme Soul. It will then be

easy to see that the Lord is intimately related to the universe and that the process of the universe is impelled and guided by Him. If the phenomena of the universe of matter are prompted and guided by the universe of mind, the latter in its turn derives its power and energy from God Himself. The activities of the universes of mind and matter are to be traced to the Lord, who is their soul.

Our analysis in this chapter has led us to the postulation of three fundamental entities: *prakṛiti*, *purusha* and *Uttama Purusha*. Of these, *prakṛiti* is subordinate to *purusha*, and both these are subordinate to the *Parama Purusha*. When this is understood, the riddle of the universe is practically solved. When one understands God to be the *Uttama Purusha*, one understands all that has to be known. And such a knowledge is bound to have a characteristic effect on the course of one's conduct. Having understood that *prakṛiti* is *jaḍa*, that the *purusha* is *chaitanya*, immortal and indestructible, that the state of embodiment limits the power and freedom of the soul and that the *purusha* is a part of the Lord Himself, we can see that the path of wisdom lies in emancipating the *purusha* from the bondage of *prakṛiti*. We must all endeavour to see that our souls rise above the limitations of *prakṛtii* and acquire more and more the characteristics of Him, of whom every *jīva* is a part. This is the natural direction of the progressive evolution of the soul, and we are all called upon to shape our lives in consonance with this. Such a life means a life of service rendered unto Him, who is the source and centre of all power, and of whom we are all parts. The right kind of service implies at least two things. It is of itself positive, but it requires a negative preparation. Unless we vanquish the tendencies in favour of selfishness and sensuality that arise out of the influence of *prakṛiti* over the *purusha*, it will not be possible for us to live that life of positive service, which is demanded by the rule of equality. A life of *samatva* and service in this world is a life of service rendered unto God, who is the supreme lord and the supreme soul of the universe.

One who knows the truths taught in this chapter, will live that life continually. The lode-star of his faith will guide him in all states of mind, amid all chances of fortune. Under no

circumstances whatever will he swerve from the path of absolute equality and unselfish altruism. The expression, '*sarvabhāvena*', has also been understood to mean that such a devotee will serve God in all manner of ways, by the various methods of worship that have been taught.

इति गुह्यतमं शास्त्रमिदमुक्तं मयानघ ।
एतद्बुद्ध्वा बुद्धिमान् स्यात्कृतकृत्यश्च भारत ॥ २० ॥

20. Thus, O sinless one, has this most secret science been taught by Me. Knowing this, O Arjuna, one becomes wise and fulfills all duties.

You must have seen by now how the fifteenth chapter is a lengthy commentary on the last *śloka* of the fourteenth chapter. At the same time it is also a summary of the great conclusions of the *Vedānta*. The philosophic basis of the realities posited by the *Vedānta* is here expounded, and the metaphysical foundation for its ethics is also clearly explained. In this chapter a brief and synthetic survey of the teachings of the *Vedānta* is given as in no other. The whole of the *Gītā* is a *śāstra*. And this chapter in particular is styled the most secret *śāstra*, because it deals with the mysteries of the philosophy of conduct. Perhaps, my translation of the word, '*śāstra*', as 'science' is not quite accurate. The word, '*śāstra*', is derived from the root, *śas*, to command. *Śāstra* is literally that which commands, and it is easy to see why the term has come to be applied largely to that which authoritatively imposes injunctions of conduct. Nothing can impose rules of conduct on us with such authority as truth. If one asks why a particular course of conduct is to be followed, the only satisfactory answer is that such a course of conduct and that alone is in consonance with truth.

Many European thinkers have discussed the ultimate basis for the authority which we all ascribe to the demands of imperative duty. Like the imperious command of a despotic sovereign, the call of duty has to be obeyed. It is an order which exercises a compulsive force and often imposes on us a course of action which may seem to be against our immediate interests. It bids

us not to lie, even though by speaking the truth we may suffer. Wherefrom does it derive this authority? The only satisfactory answer is that duty is in consonance with truth, that is to say, with the real nature of things. The command to lie, even though it may come to us at times with all the power and prestige of self-interest, rests on shaky foundations. It is invalidated by the fact that it is not in consonance with the ultimate truth of things. It is here that we can see the advantage of philosophic investigation, which has to rest the authority of duty not merely on the scriptures, but has to go further and show that the authority of the scriptures rests on the ultimate truth and reality of things. Thus, that which gives us commandments on conduct is also the science relating to the ultimate truth of things. Knowledge and conduct are in this manner indissolubly connected together. To know the truth is to know what is right, and to know what is right is to know the nature of one's duty.

If you have followed me so far, you will not find it difficult to understand why Śrī Kṛishṇa describes this chapter as '*guhyatamaṃ śāstram*'. It is the most secret *śāstra*, not in the sense that it is kept purposely hidden and taught only to a privileged few, but in the sense that its teachings are not easily grasped. To understand them, a trained mind must carefully analyse the phenomena of the world. Few of us have seen God, but it appears to me rather foolish and impertinent to deny the existence of One who is the foundation and support and guide of all. It is the difficulty of the undertaking that Śrī Kṛishṇa emphasises.

Whoever knows this is possessed of intelligence. This instrument of knowledge has been given to us to understand what is most worthy of our attention. It has not been given to us to change truth into untruth, or to show untruth as plausible truth. It will have served its real purpose and fulfilled its true function only when it enables us to know the truth. Only by knowing the truth can we justify the existence of our intelligence. Consequently he alone can be called wise, discerning and intelligent, who knows the truth. Knowledge of truth must also enable us to justify our lives, our very existence. In other words, by knowing the truth, we earn the right to be called intelligent; and by the same token we are compelled to order our life into consonance

with the knowledge that we have gained. When our life is thus regulated, nothing which we ought to do remains undone. All the duties that fall to our lot are duly performed; we become *kṛita-kṛityas*, free from sensuality and selfishness and devoted to a life of *samatva* and service. By learning the truth, we justify our intelligence; by living nobly and unselfishly, we justify our very existence.

As it is already late, please allow me to stop here for the present.

CHAPTER XVI

lxvii

Last time we concluded the fifteenth chapter, which goes by the name of *Purushottama-yoga*. Its theme is the great *Purusha*, who is the supreme ruler of everything that there is in the worlds of mind and matter. In a few striking phrases, Yāmunāchārya sums up the chapter thus:

> अचिन्मिश्राद्विशुद्धाच्च चेतनात्पुरुषोत्तमः ।
> व्यापनाद्भरणात्स्वाम्यादन्यः पञ्चदशोदितः ॥

In the fifteenth chapter, the *Purushottama* is declared to be other than the soul which is in its state of pristine purity and freedom as well as the soul which is in association with *prakṛiti*, as He pervades and sustains and exercises sovereign supremacy over them.

You must have made out by now how a knowledge of God in the terms set forth above is equivalent to a knowledge of all that is worth knowing. The distinction between *prakṛiti* and *purusha*, and that between these and God form the foundation of all ethics and philosophy. The code of conduct that we have to follow is no more than a statement of the interrelations among these ultimate analytical postulates of human thought. All these are discussed here more or less as a commentary on the last *śloka* of the fourteenth chapter, wherein Śrī Kṛishṇa declares Himself to be the foundation and support of the visible universe, of the world of indestructible immortality, of the law of eternal righteousness,

and of the supreme happiness which is attained by all those who reach the goal of salvation. The contrast that is referred to here between two worlds, one changing and therefore destructible, and the other changeless and eternal, is a contrast between mind and matter, as you must have made out from your knowledge of the teachings of the second chapter of the *Gītā*. The everlasting rule of righteousness is declared to have God for its *pratishṭhā* ; that is, it depends on God for its obligatoriness. This chapter derives its importance mainly from its exposition of this theme.

Philosophers the world over have not yet ceased disputing over the foundations for the laws of ethics. There is no agreement on the question: What is the sanction behind the moral law? It is one thing to be told that a certain course of action is right, that is to say, desirable from some points of view; but it is quite a different thing to understand that what is right must be followed at all costs. Why should one do the right and eschew the wrong? Here is a question as interesting as difficult. It is possible to prove that many of the rules of morality observed by various communities in various stages of civilisation are conducive to the good and happiness of the several communities among whom they are prevalent. For example, it is an almost universal moral maxim that one should always tell the truth. There is no great difficulty in proving that, since we all have to live and move in society, it is to the advantage of both ourselves and of the community in which we live never to tell a lie. Circumstances may arise when telling an untruth may offer immediate advantages. But lying one's way out of an embarrassing situation or lying with intent to deceive is always bad policy. For one cannot keep up the game for long. And when one is found out, the consequences are sufficiently deterrent. In this way, we may go about proving the usefulness of most moral laws. But no amount of skilful reasoning of this kind can furnish an answer to the question: Why is one compelled to do that which is right? The voice of duty comes to us with the force of an imperative command. When one seeks to understand the sanction behind this so-called categorical imperative, one is led to the conclusion that there is no satisfactory basis for the moral law, unless we give it a divine foundation. It is only when we regard God as the foundation and support of the worlds of mind and matter as well as of the law of eternal righteousness, that

we can understand how the moral law is obligatory and obedience to it compulsory. If you do not obey that law, you miss the chance of finding your own natural destiny.

You may remember in this connection our discussion on reconciling the freedom of the individual with the pre-determination of the process of the universe by God. The question arose when we tried to understand the significance of Śrī Kṛishṇa's statement: "Become merely an instrument in My hands, O Arjuna." (XI. 33.) The battle, Śrī Kṛishṇa says in effect, is not to be staved off by Arjuna's sentimental objections. The guiding hand of God has brought the forces of history to this conflict, and individual responses to the situation cannot materially affect the general trend of events. Those friends and kinsmen for whose possible death Arjuna mourns, are sure to die in the ensuing battle. If Arjuna declines to fight and lays down his arms, he will incur the slur of failing to do an unpleasant duty. Viewed against the background of the surging tides of history, we seem utterly insignificant; we are like specks of dust floating on a flood. It is not given to any one, however great, to alter the plan and purpose of God.

As I told you then, we may look upon the whole universe as a magnificent machine, directed and controlled by God. It is working towards a definite, well-aimed purpose which is beyond our grasp. We are all placed near that machine and compelled to relate ourselves to it in various ways. These relations may be characterised by either harmony or disharmony. If we adjust ourselves harmoniously to the working of the machine, we fulfil the purpose of our lives. If we choose to be recalcitrant, the plans of God are not hindered; we only succeed in contriving our own ruin. In the former case, we enjoy the privilege of becoming fellow-workers with God, though our contribution is insignificant. In the other case, we become rebels against His authority, breakers of the moral law.

In this manner, we have to make out the existence of the three great entities: *prakṛiti* or matter, *purusha* or soul, and *Purushottama* or God. The *Purushottama* is the Lord of the universe, the foundation and support of both *prakṛiti* and *purusha*, and the basis on which the relations among these three

are determined. These interrelations make up what is spoken of as the moral law. They teach us a great deal about the manner in which the *purusha* has to adjust himself in relation to *prakṛiti*. And they tell us too about the right manner in which we may set about shaping our ideals. Our answer to the question whether it is the pain and the pleasure that are associated with the body, which ought to determine the mandates and prohibitions of our moral code, is closely dependent on our view of the relation that subsists between the body and the soul. We prefer the interests of the soul to those of the body, only when we know that the spirit is more important than the flesh. Take again the question of our relations with our fellow-men. We have been repeatedly told that our conduct must be guided and controlled by the rule of equality; and it is easy to see that this rule is based on the view that the soul is more significant than the body. Such differences as exist among the various beings in the universe are due to the material configurations of their physical frames. All souls are alike, and if they are the enduring and significant parts of all embodiments, it is reasonable to hold that the guiding rule of conduct should be based on their similarity rather than on the physical and physiological differences that separate them from one another.

You can now see how the mandates and prohibitions of morality are derived from the interrelations among the three ultimate analytical postulates of philosophy, namely, matter, mind and God. In the fifteenth chapter, these interrelations are described. We learn that *prakṛiti* is subordinate to the *purusha*, who in turn is subordinate to God. The *Purushottama* is the foundation alike of the universe of matter and the universe of mind; and being so, He defines their attributes and determines the relations that subsist among them all. In other words, He is also the foundation and support of the everlasting law of righteousness and of the endless bliss of the emancipated. The highest effort of all philosophy, then, is to attempt to know Him in these terms; and such knowledge alone offers the best guidance for the proper determination of our conduct in life. And it is for this reason that Śrī Kṛishṇa declares that He has taught the most secret of sciences in this chapter. The secret of the basis of all morality is revealed to us here. The word, '*śāstra*', as you know, means some

binding enactment of law which commands our obedience. We speak of an enactment as *śāsana*, while *śāstra* is that which makes the *śāsana* obligatory. Once we realise that God is the foundation of the universe and the sanction behind the moral law, then all our difficulties in the matter of the determination of the right course of conduct in life vanish.

Throughout the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛishṇa's object is to impress upon Arjuna the great importance of doing one's duties without caring for the consequences and without attachment to the fruits thereof. Rules of conduct like this may be enunciated easily enough, but it is not quite so easy to establish the sanction and authority behind such rules. Our natural tendency is to prefer what is advantageous to ourselves. The good is often confounded with self-interest. I remember having read years ago a famous work, *Social Evolution* by Benjamin Kidd, which illustrates this tendency in a notable manner. Writing of the function of religion in social evolution, Kidd discusses the question with a great deal of insight into the historical development of European civilisation. But his final conclusion on the subject invites some criticism. He declares that religion has helped all social progress by giving an ultra-rational sanction to morality. In other words, Kidd must be understood to maintain that our reason fails to give a satisfactory sanction to morality and that religion steps in to furnish an authority which is beyond the jurisdiction of reason. Whatever is not to our own interest, the argument runs, stands condemned in the presence of reason; egoistic self-assertion is as rational as altruistic self-sacrifice is irrational.

I need not say how dangerous such a point of view may prove to be. A religion that rests on the futility of reason can end only in thoughtless indifference or traditionalism. No thinking being can submit to any external authority which reason cannot criticise and which cannot find its validity and justification in the inward life of the spirit. We can allow ourselves to be led by authority, but only if it is trustworthy. As Carlyle said long ago, we cannot always be verifying our ready-reckoner, and it is convenient as well as reasonable to submit to any authority which is ready at any moment to pass the test of reason. It is, however, quite a different thing to demand our allegiance to an authority which

reason may never question. As has been well said: "To maintain an unreal equilibrium between faith and reason, between a reverence which accepts and an intelligence which rejects the same things, can issue only in one of two results, practical unbelief or the violent suppression of doubt." If Revelation is the basis of morality, reason must not be denied competence to judge its credentials. It is hardly a legitimate endeavour to prove to reason a right to set reason at defiance.

All this difficulty arises only when reason is understood as an appreciation of one's own interests. As a matter of fact, it is something higher. It has the power of balancing conflicting interests, sifting contradictory evidence. The apparent conflict between the demands of self-interest and the mandates of morality can be resolved only when reason is allowed to pass its judgment on all the facts of the case. We may learn that the good is ultimately identical with self-interest, but only after undergoing the necessary spiritual and intellectual discipline. Subject to the bondage of matter and in the grip of a boundless egotism, we do not have any adequate conception of the truth which may be revealed to the sanctified spirit. Our life is so completely under the illusions of sense that we fail to realise our kinship with God. If our bondage to these illusions is complete, if no one in the history of mankind had ever risen above them, then indeed religion would be a dream, a hypothesis, "the guess of a worm in the dust and the shadow of its desire". But as a matter of fact, inspired sages and seers have again and again come forward to impress upon us truths that we might otherwise have ignored. There is nothing mysterious about these truths. If we, too, go through the necessary spiritual discipline, we may also realise them in their fulness.

The laws of ethics rest ultimately on the vital demands of our spiritual experience. The presence of a conscience within us and our sense of freedom of will and moral responsibility indicate to us the existence of a power within us which makes for righteousness. The practice of *yoga* can lead us on to the wonderful experience of *samādhi*, wherein the reality of our spiritual nature is made manifest to us. We then learn in a blinding flash of insight the supremacy of the soul over the physical embodiment. And from

that it is an easy step to arrive at the great law of *samatva* and service. Some persevering *yogins* may even be vouchsafed the rare experience of God-realisation, when the deepest mysteries of the universe will stand revealed. Experiences like these demonstrate to us the truths on which the laws of ethics are based. They may not be the possession of all, but the requisite training and discipline will enable us to realise them for ourselves. The sages of the *Upanishads* declare that, when we subdue our passions and free ourselves from all perturbations and prejudices, the light of Truth will burst on us in all its glory. Says the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*: "He who sees the Self, after having become quiet, subdued, satisfied, patient and collected, sees the self in the Self, sees all in the Self .... Evil does not overcome him, he overcomes all evil. Evil does not burn him, he burns all evil. Free from evil, free from spots, free from doubt, he becomes the true *Brāhmaṇa*." (iv. 4. 23.)

It is now possible for us to decide which course of action is right and which is wrong. Whatever is not in keeping with the everlasting rule of righteousness, of which God is the support, cannot be right. For it is not in our own interests if we understand these aright. After all, what is our true interest? Not certainly the pleasures, such as they are, of this life. They all have an end, they cloy and satiate, they make us ever discontented. The end and aim of life must be the attainment of the peculiarly unique happiness which is the portion of the soul that has obtained deliverance from the bondage of *karma*. The unmixed bliss which constitutes the very nature of the emancipated soul is something of which we, in this life of material bondage, can have no adequate conception. It is said that the *yogin* in the state of *samādhi*, when he turns his mind away from the outer world and concentrates himself upon himself, arrives at a state wherein he is entirely oblivious of the outer world but is fully alive to his own reality as a conscious being. And the recorded experiences of the *yogins* declare that the power of the principle of consciousness to perceive, think and reason becomes enormously increased in that condition of peculiar psychological trance. In a way, we can see how such a statement cannot be untrue, for it is known to us all that the greater the concentration of the mind, the greater is the power of the intellect to reason and to understand, and the greater

the power of the senses to perceive. Nothing so weakens the mind as distraction. When the mind is fully and intensely concentrated on itself so as to be completely oblivious of the external world, we must expect the powers of our consciousness to be at their highest. This is the most that we can say, as men who have not had the illumining experience of the *yogins*.

However, the description of the state of *samādhi* and the distinctive bliss that one feels therein, as found in Sanskrit literature, must enable us to have some idea of the *sukha* which is said to be attained by the emancipated soul. And surely it is more in our interests to strive after the attainment of this *sukha* rather than after the evanescent pleasures of this world. Even selfishness, understood in a comprehensive sense, leads us to the path of *samatva* and service. Reason and morality do not clash ultimately. Given the choice between a higher and a lower good, if we choose the latter, we cannot be called reasonable. We are then irrational, having judged our interests erroneously. So then, as this *aikāntika sukha* is the *summum bonum* of our lives and as the means for its attainment is the rule of righteousness, you can easily see how a knowledge of the nature of the *Parama-purusha*, who is the foundation and support of both these, is equivalent to a knowledge of the purpose of life and morality. And that is why the fifteenth chapter, which reveals to us the deepest mysteries of ethics, is called the most secret of sciences.

Now, it is a fact of experience that, when we are offered a choice between a higher and a lower good, we do not always prefer the former. It is not that we do not know which is the higher good, and how unreasonable it is to choose the lower good in preference to the higher. But the fact is that, knowing the better, we choose the worse. The question why this should be so has been answered, I believe, in the ninth chapter. You may remember the statement made therein that *prakṛiti* acts as a veil or blinding wall to some and as the revealer of God to some others. *Prakṛiti* was said to be *āsurī* in the former case and *daivī* in the latter case. The same question is taken up for consideration in the sixteenth chapter, but from a different standpoint.

We are not now concerned with the attitude of *prakṛiti* towards the *purusha*, but have to study the question from the

point of view of the endeavour made by the *purusha* to follow the rule of righteousness which is established in God. The question that we have to frame for our consideration is this: Why is it that some follow the rule of righteousness, while others do not? The reason for this difference appears to lie in the inherited capacity of individuals. It is within our experience that men are born with different capacities and endowments, that some are born wise and others foolish, that some are born strong and others ill and weak, and, what is more important, that some are born good and others evil and vicious. While all bodies are made of the same *prakṛiti* and all souls are alike, all embodied creatures are different from one another. These differences are determined by the *karma* of each individual soul endeavouring to evolve its final destiny. The soul in the condition of embodiment may be imagined to be in a prison-house, undergoing penal discipline. If the reforming power of the discipline of the prison-house is not sufficient, the soul is sent on to another jail, to undergo a course of further discipline. Now, just as there are confirmed law-breakers on whom the discipline of the prison does not have anything like the desired effect—we have all heard of impenitent 'jail-birds'—there are souls which persist in offending against the divinely ordained law of righteousness and which in consequence keep on passing from one prison-house of flesh to another.

In other words, the discipline of the prison of *samsāra* does not act in the same manner in relation to all souls. The manner in which this discipline in any particular embodiment has helped an individual soul to make itself free determines to a large extent the nature of the new prison into which the soul is to be put next. Every embodied being is like a jail-cell with a prisoner in it. The convict has been in many cells before, and very probably will be in many other cells hereafter. If this is understood, you can easily see why one embodied being is not like another in respect of physical, intellectual and moral tendencies. The history of each case is specific and particular. The *karma* accumulated by one embodied being is different from that accumulated by another. And in consequence of this difference in the nature of the burden of *karma*, there are differences between one embodied being and another. These differences relate to physical, intellectual and

moral capacities and are transmitted through heredity and other means.

It is not difficult to see now why *prakṛiti* acts as *āsurī* in some cases and as *daivī* in others, and why some men are naturally disposed to obey the law of righteousness while others are not so inclined. When individual tendencies are thus conflicting, we cannot entirely rely on our judgment and reason as infallible guides for our conduct in life. And so, in the last *śloka* of the sixteenth chapter, Śrī Kṛishṇa tells us distinctly that, in settling what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, the *śāstra* is our authority. If we leave men to follow their own impulses and inclinations, most of them would work out their own ruin. Philosophical analysis, the practice of *yoga* leading on to self-realisation and God-realisation, these tell us that the *aikāntika sukha* mentioned before is the worthiest object of attainment for us and that the rule of righteousness is the means for its attainment. But the majority of mankind fail to realise this and prefer the pleasures of this world and the satisfaction of the senses.

It would be absurd to base morality on the changing whims and caprices of men. The democratic spirit of the modern age has striven to emphasise the importance of the individual at the expense of society. There has been an endeavour to impose on society the discordant ideals and tastes of the individuals of whom it is made up, in matters of morality. It is argued that society is nothing more than a collection of individuals and that it cannot set itself up as an arbiter of tastes and ideals. The morality of any society at any particular period, they say, is based on the desires and interests of the dominant group in that society. There is certainly truth in this view, but it ignores the important fact that society is not an arithmetical sum of individuals but something distinctive and unique by itself. Society, as a whole, has a characteristic individuality and power of its own, that are recognised by all statesmen and legislators, reformers and founders of religions. All the world over, at all times in the history of civilisation, it has been recognised that society has an authority which no individual can have. Sometimes the exercise of this authority may not be entirely reasonable, but on the whole the authority of social groups and the traditions that they

have successfully imposed on successive generations, have encouraged progress and civilisation. There is such a thing as social experience apart from the experience of individuals. The problems that every headstrong youth desires to solve in his own way, have all been met and solved in the past; and in the interests of social harmony, it is essential that men should not be left to their own devices in regulating their conduct. At every moment of our lives, the influence of authority unobtrusively moulds our feelings, our aspirations and our beliefs.

"We must not forget," says Balfour, "that it is authority rather than reason, to which, in the main, we owe not religion merely, but ethics and politics; that it is authority which supplies us with essential elements in the premises of science; that it is authority, rather than reason, which lays deep the foundations of social life; that it is authority, rather than reason, which cements its superstructure." And he concludes that our superiority to the brute creation lies not so much in our capacity of convincing and being convinced by the exercise of reasoning as in our capacity of influencing and being influenced by the exercise of authority. We may, if we please, amend this by saying that our superiority to the brute creation consists in our intelligently surrendering ourselves to trustworthy authority. The fact, nevertheless, remains that human life has been moulded in the past and will be moulded in the future by social authority, that morality rests upon it, that the foundations of the state are laid upon it.

It is legitimate to ask: Whence does society derive this authority? Ultimately, this is not far different from the question: Whence does the moral law derive its sanction? The answer may be given in the words of one of the greatest thinkers of Europe—that we have to look on the moral law as the will of God. The society which compels us to adopt the everlasting rule of righteousness, is *pramāṇa* or authoritative in the determination of conduct, inasmuch as this rule is the embodiment of the will of God and inasmuch as, if we are left to the tender mercies of our own reason and of our appreciation of our interests, we are sure to miss the goal. Most of what I have told you now will become clearer during the course of our study of the sixteenth chapter. And this, we may begin now.

The kind of life expected of us if we sincerely follow the law of righteousness, is first described in the following *ślokas* :

श्री भगवानुवाच—

अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धिर्ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः ।
दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम् ॥ १ ॥
अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागश्शान्तिरपैशुनम् ।
दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम् ॥ २ ॥
तेजः क्षमा धृतिश्शौचमद्रोहो नातिमानिता ।
भवन्ति संपदं दैवीमभिजातस्य भारत ॥ ३ ॥

ŚRI KṚISHṆA SAID :

1. Fearlessness, purity, firm and continued attachment to the life of philosophic wisdom, charity, self-restraint, and worship, study of the *Vedas*, penance, and sincerity,

2. Freedom from violence, truthfulness, freedom from anger, renunciation, peacefulness, aversion to slander, compassion towards (all) beings, freedom from avarice, gentleness, modesty and steadiness,

3. Genius, forgiveness, strength of will, cleanliness, freedom from treachery, lack of self-conceit,—(these) O Arjuna, are his, who is born to inherit the wealth of the gods.

The inheritors of *daivī sampat* are those who are endowed with the capacity to follow the rule of righteousness and are blessed with the vision which pierces the veil of *māyā* and sees into the heart of things—that is, those to whom *prakṛiti* has acted as the revealer of the Divine. First of all, they are stated to be free from fear. We have frequently discussed the nature and causes of fear in the course of our study. As you are aware, fear takes hold of us, when there is the prospect of our losing something which is *priya* or desirable to us, or of our experiencing something which is *apriya* or disagreeable to us. Now, the principles of *karma-yoga* require that we should rise above pain and pleasure, desire and aversion and such like pairs of

opposites. To a *dvandvātīta*, there is nothing which is *priya* or *apriya*. Hence to acquire fearlessness, one must be a *dvandvātīta*.

This may be achieved if there is *sattva-saṁśuddhi*—a term which requires some explanation. It has been interpreted to mean purity of the heart, but it appears to me that something slightly different is meant here. You all know that Hinduism has made elaborate regulations about food. Partly, no doubt, this must have been due to the common tendency of early religions to regard eating as a sacrament and to invest commensality with a religious significance. In part, however, this was also due to the idea that the nature of the food that we eat affects us, not merely physically, but morally and mentally as well. There is a passage in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* (vii. 26. 2) which states that the purity of the food that we eat determines the purity of our physical constitution and that this in turn determines the strength and power of our *smṛiti*. Ordinarily, of course, the term, '*smṛiti*', stands for memory, but in this particular text it must be understood as referring to all the powers of our soul—will, intelligence and wisdom.

It is not very difficult to see why such a view was held. It is known to you all that certain substances, when eaten or drunk, produce a marked effect on our mental and moral tendencies. Alcohol, for instance, debilitates our understanding and undermines our sense of moral responsibility. The effects of opium and other powerful narcotics are also well known. There are certain drugs, which are capable of producing insanity if given in sufficiently large doses and for a sufficiently long period. Years ago, when I was a student in the Medical College, I remember that our Professor of Anatomy once traced the mental and spiritual differences between herbivorous and carnivorous animals to the nature of the food eaten by them. If we catch a tiger and imprison it in a cage, we always find it restlessly and almost fiercely moving hither and thither. On the other hand, a buffalo left free in the midst of an extensive field loves to sit still. In some corner, where there is a little mire, it will settle down happily and find delight in quiet rest. These are two extremes, our Professor told us, and they are more significant than any intervening examples we can think of.

Food thus appears to have something to do with the constitution of our bodies and with the energy which the body has in store. It may also be argued that, as between the vegetarian and the non-vegetarian, fundamental differences exist, based on the amount of energy that they severally expend to convert their food into animal tissue. It may be urged that a greater amount of energy is necessary to convert vegetarian than non-vegetarian food into the tissues of our bodies, and that the meat-eater, having at his disposal a larger amount of spontaneous physical energy, will be more inclined to be the slave of his body than the vegetarian. All this does not imply that vegetarian diet is weakening or debilitating. The West has come to recognise, after the victories of the Japanese in the recent war against Russia, that vegetarian diet offers immunity against various diseases and confers great powers of endurance. The facts that I have placed before you tend to show that the nature of the food that we eat determines our physiological constitution and that there is ample evidence in support of the declaration of the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*. If our *prakṛiti* is pure, it means that our natural temperament is of the desired kind and will help us to follow the law of righteousness.

It may also be noted that the vegetarian is popularly considered to be more meditative and contemplative than one who lives on animal food. One of the many reasons suggested for the difference between the meditative East and the aggressive West is the giving up of non-vegetarian diet by the East. I will not say that it is a complete answer to the problem, but it does seem to be a part of the answer. When our physical propensities are not in favour of a life of selfishness and sensuality, but are such as may help us in maintaining righteousness and achieving self-restraint and self-sacrifice, then we have some capacity to live the life of philosophic wisdom. It may be observed that, in the case of every individual, whether he is a vegetarian or not, as he grows older and older, he grows more and more contemplative. There is 'less of body and more of grace'. With the decline in the vigour of the body, the spirit asserts itself and makes it easy to live a life of self-restraint and self-sacrifice. Now, against the course of reasoning outlined here, it may be argued that to adopt the vegetarian diet and the life of contemplation is to court weakness. That this is not so may be made out from the victories of Japan over Russia.

Dāna is not mere giving of gifts, but the spiritual impulse that is behind every act of charity and generosity. *Dama* is self-restraint, the power to tame the tiger and the ape within us. *Yajña* is worship. When we rise above the promptings of pleasure and pain and lead a life of philosophic thought, equality and service, when we practise *dāna* and *dama*, then we will be naturally led to worship the God who is the foundation of the law of righteousness that we have to follow. By *svādhyāya* is meant the study of the *Vedas*. *Adhyāya* is the process of learning the *Vedas* by reciting the hymns in the manner in which the teacher chants them. *Svādhyāya* is repeating the sacred hymns by oneself after learning them from the *āchārya*, something very much like what the students call 'learning by heart'. I think, however, that the word is used here in a more comprehensive sense to indicate also serious study and independent thought on the problems of life that are discussed in the scriptures. *Tapas* is the conquest of the self, the mortification of the flesh as they call it. *Dama* is the power to tame the wild beast within us, *tapas* is the process by which the animal is tamed. Fasting, exposure, hard work, continuous thought and meditation, these and others constitute *tapas*, which is the process by which we can make pleasure cease to be pleasure and pain cease to be pain. *Arjavam* is sincerity, agreement between the outer act and the inner thought.

It is hardly necessary to say that the law of righteousness requires that we should practise *ahimsā*, that is, that we should inflict no injuries on others and that we should harbour ill-feelings against none. Anger is only another name for a desire to harm and injure others, and freedom from this (*akrodha*) is clearly essential. It also follows that we should not stop with merely keeping ourselves aloof from aggressive wrong-doing, but that we should also live a life of positive service. *Dayā* has been defined by a commentator as the inability to look at the misery of others, the desire to rid the world of pain. It goes without saying that scandal-mongering is inconsistent with the law of righteousness and must be given up by all who would save their souls. Indeed, the expression, '*apaiśuna*', occurring in this verse, has been glossed to mean not merely refraining from spreading scandals, but also the giving up of all such speech as will cause trouble to others. *Aloluptvam* is such firmness and steadiness as will save us from

yielding to temptations. There is also another reading, '*alolutvam*', which also means practically the same thing. *Achāpalam*, which is also later mentioned in this stanza, means freedom from fickleness. The fickleness must be understood to relate to both judgment and taste. The distinction between *achāpalam* and *aloluptvam* consists in this, that freedom from fickleness is, as it were, a necessary preliminary to the acquisition of the firmness which conquers all temptations.

Tyāga—to go back a little—is the readiness to renounce which is needed to acquire freedom from attachment. *S'ānti* is that equanimity and evenness of disposition which has been described many times before in the *Gītā*. By '*mārdavam*' is meant gentleness. Literally it means softness, but it is preferable to understand it in the other sense here. '*Hrī*' stands for modesty and the sense of shame. It may be noted here that the sense of shame felt by the wrongdoer is different from that which is present in all peaceful and law-abiding citizens. The former is the result of an adverse judgment passed by public opinion. The latter, which alone must be meant here, looks forward to the judgment of society and, in anticipation thereof, moulds and guides conduct.

'*Tejas*' means 'light' literally. Figuratively, it is used in the sense of inborn power—the power which is possessed by heroic men of genius on account of their magnificent natural endowment. Such men are pioneers and pathfinders, the guides and exemplars of humanity. If the glow of genius is a divine inheritance, it may be asked whether we can do all that the great men have done, imitate their excellences as well as their defects. An ideal teacher is bound to ask his disciples to follow only whatever is good in his conduct. Slips and faults there may be in the lives of great men. They are not any the less slips and faults, because they were committed by the great. On the whole, however, the splendour and power of genius are divine and are capable of revealing to us the glory of God. *Tejas* is that light of genius, in whose presence small faults and imperfections become insignificant like the sunspots in the splendour of the sun. *Kshamā* is patience, forgiveness. It has been pointed out that, while *akrodha* is merely the suppression of the internal disturbance

arising out of acts that provoke to anger, *kshamā* is the maintenance of an attitude of calm friendliness even while unfriendly acts are being done. *Dhṛiti* is the power of will, the quality of decision. *S'aucha* is cleanliness of body and mind. *Adroha* is freedom from that vilest of all sins, treachery. *Nātimānitā* is humility, absence of vanity, freedom from the tendency to think too much of oneself.

In relation to the person who is so nobly born as to inherit *daivī sampat*, there is this fund of good attributes. Even as intellectual capacity and physical vigour are matters of heredity and endowment, moral worth is also to a large extent determined by birth and inheritance. While some men are born to inherit the wealth of the gods, there are others who are denied this legacy. Of these inheritors of diabolical wealth, Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to speak. We may, however, postpone consideration of the question till next week and stop here for the present.

lxviii

The *devas* and the *asuras* have figured largely in Hindu mythology. The former are the powers of light, the latter are spirits of gloom and darkness. In the *Upanishads*, they assumed a figurative significance. The *devas* and the *asuras* typified respectively the good and evil propensities in us. It is obvious that Śrī Kṛishṇa is using these terms in a very similar sense in the *Gītā*. The *devas*, Śrī Rāmānuja says, are those who follow the commands of God; and by the same token, the *asuras* are those who rebel against the authority of God and fail to render due obedience to the law of righteousness promulgated by Him. *Daivī sampat* is, therefore, that moral endowment which helps us to lead a life that is in harmony with the will of God, while *āsurī sampat* is such a fund of inherited qualities as leads us into wrong-doing. Last week, we studied Śrī Kṛishṇa's description of the noble wealth of divine endowment. The stanzas with which we have to begin our work to-day, deal with the qualities that are *āsurī* or demoniacal.

दम्भो दर्पोऽतिमानश्च क्रोधः पारुष्यमेव च ।
अज्ञानं चाभिजातस्य पार्थ सम्पदमासुरीम् ॥ ४ ॥

4. Pomp, arrogance, self-conceit and anger and also harshness and ignorance (belong) to one who is born to inherit demoniacal wealth, O Arjuna.

Dambha is ostentatious display of self-importance. *Darpa* is hauteur, arrogance, the feeling that one is strong enough to do what one likes. By '*abhimāna*' is meant self-conceit, a complacent faith in one's own greatness and importance. *Darpa* and *abhimāna* may seem synonymous, but there is a distinction that may be noted. The latter is equivalent to *atimānitā* (thinking too much of oneself); the former is the feeling of nonchalance, the calm conviction of superiority that comes out of too high an estimate of one's abilities and qualities. Under its influence, criticism and opposition are of no avail and restraints are set at naught. When both *darpa* and *abhimāna* are present, *dambha* is the inevitable outcome. *Krodha*, of course, is anger, and *pārushyam* rudeness, harshness, or even cruelty.

These qualities constitute the demoniacal endowment. Some of you may wonder why the *āsuri* qualities that are mentioned, are fewer than the *daivi*. Apart from the fact that Sri Krishna presently elaborates on the character and conduct of those who act up to these tendencies, it is worth while to note that the vices enumerated here are more than sufficient to set off and counteract all the desirable virtues described in the first three *ślokas*.

Now, if persons are born in this manner, some endowed with a capacity to live a life of purity, sacrifice and self-restraint, and others with a pronounced tendency to lead a life characterised by selfishness and sensuality, the question naturally arises: How are we to conduct ourselves? It must be borne in mind that the fact that we are born with definite moral tendencies does not render us morally irresponsible. It is left to us to choose the manner in which we may use those tendencies, and by that choice we shall be judged. We are not to pursue the path of least resistance and to place ourselves entirely under the sway of our natural instincts and impulses. If men are to obey nothing higher than their untutored

instincts and impulses, they would be prone to lead a life of sensual pleasure rather than one of wisdom and self-restraint. In the first fifteen chapters of the *Gītā*, the inferiority of a life of selfishness and sensuality to a life of *samatva* and service has been elaborately demonstrated. It must, therefore, be plain to you that *daivī* qualities are to be nurtured and cultivated, while the *āsurī* ones are to be suppressed and conquered. Śrī Kṛishṇa distinctly informs us in the next verse what would happen to us if we allow ourselves to be guided entirely by our natural instincts and impulses, both when they happen to be divine and when they are demoniacal.

दैवी सम्पद्विमोक्षाय निबन्धायासुरी मता ।
मा शुचः सम्पदं दैवीमभिजातोऽसि भारत ॥ ५ ॥

5. The heritage of the gods is deemed to be (the means) for deliverance, that of the demons for bondage. Grieve not, O Arjuna, for you are born to inherit the wealth of the gods.

The divine wealth of moral endowment is calculated to lead us on to final release, while the fund of diabolical attributes tends to strengthen our bondage. These tendencies with which we are born, are, of course, the result of our past *karma*. They tend to colour our life and shape our character. But it must always be remembered that the soul can never escape its moral responsibility and that it is ever possible for us to rise above or fall below our inherited endowment. Even a man of the *āsurī* type may see the error of his ways and set his face towards light. When Śrī Kṛishṇa divides mankind roughly into two classes, *daivī* and *āsurī*, He is recording a fact of observation. It is not His intention to teach that the inheritors of *daivī sampat* alone are eligible for salvation and that others are doomed to eternal predition. "Here", He says in effect, "are desirable characteristics and here are undesirable traits. If you are naturally endowed with these uplifting qualities, cultivate them and encourage their influence, so that you may be led on to deliverance from *samsāra*. If, however, it is your misfortune to be cursed with unlovely attributes, try to reform yourself." Understood in

this light, Śrī Kṛishṇa's teaching on this subject can never be confounded with the fatalism that kills all incentive to moral effort.

It is noteworthy that Śrī Kṛishṇa here definitely assures Arjuna that he is on the side of the angels. It is true, of course, that Śrī Kṛishṇa thoroughly disapproves of Arjuna's attitude towards war. In His view, to retire from the battlefield will constitute a clear dereliction of duty. If, however, we analyse Arjuna's attitude, we will find that, behind his refusal to fight, there is no lack of moral sensibility, no sense of indifference to duty. He is all the time acutely conscious of his duty; he is only anxious to know what his right and proper duty is at the moment. He is involved in a *dharma-saṅkaṭa*, faced by a conflict of duties. He feels that he is in honour bound to fight in the war as a soldier who has enlisted himself in a just war; he feels at the same time the horror and cruelty of war, the useless slaughter of those whom he respects and loves, and fears the grave and wide-spread social confusion that every major war is bound to leave in its wake. Pity and sympathy well up in him, and these have their roots, we must recognise, in a desire to sacrifice the interests of the self for the sake of what he deems to be higher things. Not for the sovereignty of the three worlds is he prepared to kill his own kith and kin. Troubled by a conflict of duties, Arjuna is tossed on the waves of doubt. Unable to come to any decision, he suffers the pangs of despair.

I remember to have pointed out to you during our study of the first chapter that one who feels a conflict of duties is morally superior to one who is indifferent to the claims of duty. The former is anxious to discharge the burden of his duties but unable to decide what the right course for him to adopt in a troublesome situation is; he may be overcome by indecision and remain passive. The latter does not care for his duties at all. Deliberately and of set purpose, he disregards his duties. Unwillingness to perform what is recognised to be one's duty is a clear violation of duty. But Arjuna is so intensely intent on the performance of his duty that he does not want to perform that duty in any wrong manner. If he is capable of feeling earnestly and sincerely a conflict of duties, it indicates his readiness to carry out his

duty irrespective of consequences. His troubled and anxious attitude towards war is in itself sufficient guarantee that he is born to inherit the wealth of the gods. Once he learns what precisely his duty is and overcomes his indecision, he will be saved.

द्वौ भूतसर्गौ लोकेऽस्मिन्दैव आसुर एव च ।
दैवो विस्तरशः प्रोक्तो आसुरं पार्थ मे शृणु ॥ ६ ॥

6. There are two types of creation of beings in this world : the divine and also the demoniacal. The divine has been described at length. Hear from Me, O Arjuna, about the demoniacal.

Bhūta-sarga is the creation of beings. Here it is declared that there are two different kinds of creation. One is the creation of beings with god-like endowments, with a marked potentiality in the direction of a life of virtue and purity. The other is the creation of persons with demoniac endowments characterised by an equally marked potentiality in the direction of a life of sin and impurity. The characteristics of persons of the former type have already been described at length, not merely in the opening stanzas of this chapter but also in the first fifteen chapters of the *Gītā* which contain numerous descriptions of the moral qualities that we ought to cultivate and of the attributes and types of ideal persons who are entitled to be the guides and exemplars of humanity.

Now, when we deal with two things that contradict each other in all respects, to know fully the characteristics of one of them is also to know very nearly the whole of the other. Suppose there are two persons each of whom is, as it were, the antithesis of the other—one a truth-speaker, the other a liar; one fair in appearance, the other dark; one old in age, the other young—and so forth. If I describe to you in detail the characteristics of one of them, you can surely give me a description of the other. If the *daiva sarga* has been explained, it may be taken for granted that the *āsura sarga* has also been very nearly explained. Still, Śrī Kṛishṇa, in the interests of clarity, proceeds to describe the *āsura sarga* also before drawing the moral that it is necessary to draw.

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च जना न विदुरासुराः ।
न शौचं नापि चाचारो न सत्यं तेषु विद्यते ॥ ७ ॥

7. Demoniacal persons know neither *pravṛitti* nor *nivṛitti*. Nor is purity found in them, nor even regulated conduct, nor truthfulness.

As you are well aware, our religion teaches two different ways of life known by the names of *pravṛitti-mārga* and *nivṛitti-mārga*. The former is the life of aggressive achievement, the latter is the path of renunciation and retirement. Our *śāstras* enjoin both. When imperfectly understood, *pravṛitti* and *nivṛitti* appear to be mutually contradictory. It is rather difficult to understand their true significance and effect a reconciliation between them. And hence, Śrī Kṛishṇa's teachings in the *Gītā* are mainly concerned with showing how the life of active work and achievement may well be reconciled with a life of renunciation and true self-surrender. Arjuna's *dharma-saṅkaṭa* arose out of the opposition that he saw between the call to action and the spirit of renunciation. He thought, mistakenly, that the life of renunciation and asceticism was superior to the life of action and achievement. In this sense, of course, Arjuna did not know what *pravṛitti* was and what *nivṛitti* was. Nevertheless, this ignorance is not an *āsurī* characteristic for the reason that Arjuna was earnest and sincere in his consideration of the question and was eager and anxious to learn the truth. The ignorance of the *āsurī* type of people about this question is a wanton and wilful ignorance. They do not care to consider the question at all.

Further, cleanliness of body and mind, regulated conduct and truthfulness are not found in them. These qualities constitute the deepest layers of the foundation on which the edifice of one's moral life has to be built. If this foundation is wanting, there will be no moral life worth speaking of. You may remember in this connection the story that I told you in one of our former classes of a heedless sinner who was reformed by a teacher who extracted from him a promise never to tell a lie. Truthfulness is at the basis of every rule of conduct. When there is no truthfulness, nor regulated conduct, nor purity of mind, one's moral life is wrecked. And for this reason, the lack of these essential virtues is brought

to our notice at the very commencement of Śrī Kṛishṇa's description of the *āsura sarga*.

असत्यमप्रतिष्ठं ते जगदाहुरनीश्वरम् ।
अपरस्परसंभूतं किमन्यत्कामहैतुकम् ॥ ८ ॥

8. They say: "The universe (is) unreal, without any basis, without any God, produced without any relation between an antecedent cause and a subsequent effect, and intended for the satisfaction of desire. What else (is) necessary to account for it?"

Here is a description of the philosophic outlook of persons of the demoniacal type. They refuse to recognise the reality of the universe. Nothing is real to them except their own desires. To believe in the reality of a universe is to recognise the necessity for establishing ethical relations with it, and that is the last thing they want to do. Being unreal, it has no basis and no God. It follows that the universe need obey no law of causality. A fortuitous concourse of atoms brought into existence by chance, the universe need not be understood by us to have any purpose other than the satisfaction of our desires.

We may note in passing that the expression, '*aparaspara-saṃbhūtam*,' has given rise to some difficulty in interpretation. It has been taken to mean 'not produced by mutual union (of the sexes)'. Along with *kim anyat*, it may be construed thus: "What else is produced without mutual union?" The answer to this rhetorical question is palpably in the negative. We are, therefore, to regard the *āsurī* philosophy as holding that sexual passion is the only cause of the universe. I prefer, however, to think that a characteristic philosophic position held by the Chārvākas and other secularists is outlined here. If you believe that the universe is real and sustained and supported by one who is its Lord, then you can see that the law of causation reigns supreme in the universe. God willed, and the universe came into existence. It is regulated by the laws ordained by Him for that purpose. This, in short, is the theistic position. The atheist does not believe in a God and will say that the universe came into existence accidentally. He does not believe in a final cause which

is to be regarded as the creator of the visible universe. If you retort that the universe which is after all here for all of us to see and experience, must have had a cause, he will answer that the universe is unreal and therefore *apratishṭha*. It did not come into existence in accordance with any law of causality, nor is it governed by any such law.

The question then arises: If the universe is unreal, unsupported, Lordless and brought into existence without any adequate and accountable cause, what is its purpose? Whatever may be the philosophical explanation of the birth and progress of the universe, our experience tells us that there is a universe of some kind. It may be a vanishing phantasmagoria, it may be real or unreal. Still it is there, and being there, it is legitimate to enquire what object is served by its existence. The *āsurī* type of people see no use for it except as a means for the satisfaction of their own desires. Their moral level is not much above that of the beasts of the field.

एतां दृष्टिमवष्टभ्य नष्टात्मानोऽल्पबुद्धयः ।
प्रभवन्त्युग्रकर्माणः क्षयाय जगतोऽहिताः ॥ ९ ॥

9. Maintaining this view, they lose their souls, become mean-minded, and as enemies, do fiercely harmful deeds to the destruction of the universe.

In the position of the materialist, as explained above, is there any room left for the category of the soul? Most likely he will maintain that the soul is something not far different from what we generally call the mind, functioning with life and ceasing with death. As we have seen, Śrī Kṛishṇa has given us many reasons in favour of a different philosophy based on the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. If we accept the teachings of Śrī Kṛishṇa, it is easy to see that the atheistic position is not only morally blameworthy, but also intellectually puerile. That is why men of the *āsurī* type are described as *nashṭātmānaḥ* and *alpa-buddhayaḥ*, persons of lost souls and mean intellects. Having no faith in a soul which outlives the brief space of human life, nor in a God enforcing the moral law, they become the slaves of their desires. And in trying to satisfy them, they brook no

opposition and are hindered by no scruples. Doing fiercely harmful deeds, they show themselves to be enemies of the world. They ruin not only themselves but the world as well. It is, of course, not meant to be conveyed that they destroy what God has created, nor that they adversely affect the lives of those who are steadfast in their purity and faith. It is only suggested that they tend to cause the moral life of civilisation to deteriorate and that they obstruct the progress of history in the direction of what is worthy and pure. They hinder development, they introduce undesirable influences and effects.

If the atheist asks why we should interfere with his convictions, the answer is plain. Everyone has the right to hold his own opinions on every matter under the sun in the abstract, but this right to liberty of thought is modified and curtailed by the dominant needs of society and state. Thoughts do not always remain thoughts; they lead to acts. They are, we may say, actions in an embryonic stage. That being so, it becomes the duty of society to see that certain thoughts are not encouraged. The views of the thief, of the murderer and, except on rare occasions, of even the political revolutionary with high ideals are not tolerated in any society. No one can live a life of complete isolation, thoroughly insulated from all social influences. Every individual life acts and reacts on the entire life of society. If an aggressive atheist lives in the midst of a number of pious and virtuous people, his example may have little effect. But those with weaker faith may fall and try to follow the atheist in his defiance of all laws of virtue. No reasonable man can, therefore, say that, in regard to his convictions concerning religion and morality, he must be free from all outside interference. The regulation of social life all the world over by laws and customs, traditions and conventions, indicates the necessity for such interference. Society has a right to protest against an unregulated evil life which ruins both the individual who leads it and the men amongst whom he sets his vicious example. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that the lives of those who are of the demoniacal disposition tend to the destruction of the world and actively work against the fulfilment of the destiny of the universe.

Please allow me to stop here for the present.

lxix

The whole of mankind is divided in this chapter into two distinct groups, the daivī group and the āsurī group. This classification is based on the belief that, just as men are born with peculiar physical traits and characteristic intellectual capacities, they are also born with distinctive moral idiosyncrasies. Some are born with inner potentialities that enable them to lead lives of purity and strength. There are others again with congenital tendencies in favour of crime. This belief, that men are born with special moral endowments, is not against the demonstrated conclusions of science. We may even go farther and say that modern scientific investigation is tending to support this view. Not that we are to understand that our moral lives are pre-determined at birth. The implication is that the natural endowment and power with which any individual is born, is an important factor in the constitution of his moral life and cannot be ignored. It is only when we bear these considerations in mind, that the classification of humanity into those who are blessed with the capacity to lead the moral life and those who are not so endowed, becomes intelligible.

Last week we were dealing with the characteristics of those who belong to the *āsurī sṛishṭi*. They adopt, we were told, an ideal of life in which neither God nor the soul has any place. They believe that this universe is unreal, unsupported and free from the control of a Divine Governor, and they are convinced that the only guidance for the conduct of their lives is to be derived from the play of their own natural instincts and desires. Adopting an atheistic view of the universe and the secularist view of morality, they lose their souls. They miss the supreme end for which they have been granted the boon of life. They manifest neither the strength, nor the intelligence which will enable them to arrive at the truth. As was pointed out last time, by leading lives based on atheism and secularism, they not only ruin themselves, but also hinder others from attaining their salvation. Association with them spells danger for all. The description of their characteristics is continued in the *ślokas* that follow.

कामममाश्रित्य दुष्पूरं दम्भमानमदान्विताः ।
मोहाद्गृहीत्वाऽसद्ग्राहान्प्रवर्तन्तेऽशुचिव्रताः ॥ १० ॥

10. Abandoning themselves to insatiable desires, full of pomp, pride and arrogance, (they) adopt vicious resolves through delusion and bind themselves to unholy vows.

We have already learnt that desire is by its very nature insatiable, that as fire is fed by fuel, even so desire derives nourishment from the objects of desire. It grows by what it feeds on. Persons of the demoniacal type have no ideals except the satisfaction of their desires. And, as desire is a harsh task-master whom nothing can ever satisfy, they lead lives bereft of purpose or direction, void of joy or peace. It is further stated that they are all characterised by pomp, pride and arrogance. The corresponding Sanskrit expressions, '*dambha*', '*māna*' and '*mada*', are all cognate in meaning and imply some kind of over-estimation of the self. *Dambha* is said to be the manifestation of a piety and a purity which do not actually exist. Religious hypocrites are common the world over and are always characterised by the desire to show themselves off as above the common herd in matters spiritual. *Māna* is the conviction that one is more worthy of honour and respect than one deserves. When we want to be praised and honoured for virtues and qualities that are not ours, then we are characterised by *māna*. It corresponds to pride in a somewhat derogatory sense. *Mada* is the delusion of over-confidence in and over-estimation of one's abilities. You may, if you like, differentiate these three qualities in this context by looking upon *dambha* as relating to the religious aspect, *māna* as being concerned with the moral aspect, and *mada* as referring to the intellectual and physical aspects of our life.

The underlying assumption of self-importance in all these cases may be regarded as the means for the fulfilment of an end, namely, the satisfaction of desires. It gives the needed impetus towards making the necessary efforts and helps to overcome such scruples as may stand in the way. The desire to stand well in the eyes of society and to earn honour and respect, a proper appreciation of one's own qualities—these are not necessarily

vices. More often than not, they constitute a powerful incentive to moral effort. But when they lead to humbug and hypocrisy and to a continuous display of aggressive selfishness, they become demoniacal attributes. This is made clear by the reference to *asad-grāha* and *aśuchi-vrata* in the later half of the stanza. *Asad-grāha* is an improper mental resolve. All resolutions made for satisfying the promptings of desire are improper, judged from the standpoint of the teachings of the *Gītā* relating to the salvation of soul-emancipation and God-attainment. The determination to amass wealth or to titillate the palate cannot show us the way to liberation. Desire gives rise to *saṅga*, *saṅga* breeds *karma* and *karma* creates bondage. Now, improper resolves are made, because people do not know the truth and are deluded about their real interests. And to carry out these improper resolves, they become *aśuchi-vratas*, wedded to unholy vows. *Grāha* is the mental resolve; *vrata* is the carrying out of the resolution arrived at.

चिन्तामपरिमेयाश्च प्रलयान्तामुपाश्रिताः ।
कामोपभोगपरमा एतावदिति निश्चिताः ॥ ११ ॥

आशापाशशतैर्बद्धाः कामक्रोधपरायणाः ।
ईहन्ते कामभोगार्थमन्यायेनार्थसञ्चयान् ॥ १२ ॥

11. Subject to immeasurable anxiety ceasing only at death, holding the satisfaction of desires to be the highest (ideal), convinced that this is all,

12. Bound by a hundred ties of hope, wholly devoted to desire and anger, they wish (to obtain) heaps of wealth by unjust means for the gratification of (their) desires.

No one can be free who bases his life on desires and their satisfaction. Endless worry will gnaw at his heart. Countless desires will clamour for his attention every moment, and the satisfaction of any one of them will only give it renewed strength. He will be like a man bound by a thousand chains, each drawing him in a different direction. Servant of many masters, tossed

hither and thither by the demands of conflicting desires, he will lead a care-worn and anxious life. He has freed himself from the mandates and prohibitions of ethics and society only by pledging his soul to the all-devouring fangs of desire. Death alone can free him from the never-ceasing and exorbitant demands of desire, and even then only apparently. For the *karma* that he has created in his vain pursuit after the will-'o-the-wisp of desire will cling to him and handicap him in his next birth. To go after objects of desire in this manner is no uncommon thing. Many of us do not know that it is necessary to conquer desire to prosper here and hereafter. And even among the few who know, the power to rise to the height of renunciation is rarely found. Nevertheless, it is not often that we come across people who deliberately hold that the satisfaction of desires is the highest object attainable by man, and that no worthier ideal can demand our homage. For most of the votaries at the shrine of desire have at least an obscure feeling that man can seek higher things. It is only those who deliberately adopt an atheistic and secularistic philosophy, that formulate the satisfaction of desire to be the supreme end of life. And this is a sure indication of the *āsuri* nature.

When any one of set purpose places himself in this manner at the disposal of desire, he is deluded by the vagaries of hope. Nothing kindles desire so much as the rosy pictures which fancy paints of its satisfaction, and the man who bases his life on the satisfaction of *kāma* is literally bound by a hundred ties of hope. Continually obsessed by desires and ever expecting to realise them, nothing daunts him in his endless quest. No failures dishearten him, the renewed demands of desire reinforce his zest. He cannot call his soul his own. Every passing fancy of the moment, every little temptation enslaves him. Distracted and disintegrated, his life is without lasting peace or satisfaction. Compare him with a *sannyāsin* who is master of his soul. Superficially, it may seem as though the latter led a stunted and impoverished existence. On a further consideration, it will become clear that the *sannyāsin* is freer in the sense that he is not so much dependent on his environment; he can adjust himself to all conditions. He can bear hunger and thirst. He can find his repose on the inhospitable ground with the sky for his canopy. Desires do not obsess him, temptations leave him untouched. He is free to order and integrate

his life and make it serve some great ideal. Forgetting his self and its petty demands, he can attain enduring happiness and peace. For happiness and freedom have to be won, not through indulgence, but through renunciation. True *vairāgya* conquers fear and destroys disappointment.

Now, those who are enslaved to desire become the slaves of anger as well. For it is not always that one can accomplish one's desires. Obstacles may stand in the way. Disappointment may crown one's efforts. And when there is disappointment, there is anger against those who are held to be responsible therefor, rightly or wrongly. Every one, when free from desire, will be free from anger also, for it is thwarted desire that rouses our wrath. Desire is maddening and tyrannical in its hold. Anger is a blinding and imperious force. Those who are swayed by anger and desire are the tools of tremendous forces that know no distinction between right and wrong. They will be restrained by no scruples in guiding their lives. They will seek to amass wealth by fair means or foul in order to satisfy their desires; and likewise, by fair means or foul, they will seek to remove all obstacles standing in their way. The promptings of desire cloud our moral sense. And unfair accumulation of wealth is only a reflection in conduct of a mind enslaved to desire, demoniacal in its indifference to right and wrong.

The *dush-pūratva* of *kāma* is further explained in the following verse.

इदमद्य मया लब्धमिमं प्राप्स्ये मनोरथम् ।
इदमस्तीदमपि मे भविष्यति पुनर्धनम् ॥ १३ ॥

13. "This has now been gained by me, that wish I will fulfil. This wealth is mine, and that shall also be mine."

Can one attain peace and satisfaction after the acquisition by unfair means of a certain amount of wealth? Is there ever a stage when the ambitions of those who are the slaves of desire, get fulfilled? If they at any time gain that satisfaction, we can say of them that, though their past was full of heedless wrong-doing in

their ceaseless hunt after objects of desire, there is promise of a better future; their ambitions fulfilled and desires satisfied, they may take to ways of virtue and righteousness. But, as a matter of fact, desire knows no end. The satisfaction of one desire breeds another, or in the alternative, gives it another lease of life with renewed strength and vigour. The successful quest after one object of desire gives them no contentment. Ever restless, they look around for fresh fields and pastures new. Similar is their attitude to the wealth that they have acquired for the purpose of satisfying their desires. At the beginning, perhaps, they may not be over-greedy; they may fix a limit to their soaring ambition. But, day by day, as they progress nearer and nearer that limit, it will recede farther and farther away like the horizon. And as this money is earned unjustly, there is no limit nor end to the injustice that is practised. We cannot say: "We shall practise injustice only so far or so long. After that, we shall become honest." Even as desire is endless, the injustice that is perpetrated as a means for its satisfaction is also endless.

So far we have dealt with *kāma*, the positive incentive to the satisfaction of desire. In the next *śloka*, Śrī Kṛishṇa deals with *krodha*, which helps one negatively in the fulfilment of one's desire.

असौ मया हतश्शत्रुर्हनिष्ये चापरानपि ।
ईश्वरोऽहमहं भोगी सिद्धोऽहं वलवान्सुखी ॥ १४ ॥

14. "This enemy has been slain by me. Others, too, I shall slay. I am the lord (of all), I know how to enjoy myself (lit. I am the enjoyer). I am successful, strong (and) happy."

The quest after the objects of desire is not always crowned with success. And whenever there is failure, there is disappointment. This in turn gives rise to anger against those who are considered, rightly or wrongly, to be responsible therefor. The votaries of desire have rivals and enemies. And it is part of their creed to destroy all who stand in their way. One after another the enemies must be eliminated, and success must be achieved at any cost. When at last success is gained in this manner, there is a

feeling of exhilaration. The entire universe seems to lie at their feet for the moment; they are the monarchs of all they survey. It may be asked how this feeling of satisfied elation is to be accounted for, in view of the statement frequently made that desire is by its very nature insatiable. The answer is that this feeling of exhilaration does not arise out of contentment and peace, out of satisfaction at the fulfilment of desires; it is the normal but evanescent accompaniment of success from moment to moment. The man who holds the satisfaction of desires to be the highest ideal, is the lord of none, least of all, of himself. His desires lord it over him. He has no contentment, no satisfaction. Success gives him no lasting happiness. He is not prosperous, he is not strong, he is not happy. But he feels that he is all these. And in this stanza we are told, not what he is in reality, but what he thinks himself to be. Get rid of all ideas of justice and injustice, of right and wrong. Keep away all kindness and mercy. Think only of the fulfilment of the objects of your desires and live your life accordingly. Then how would you feel? That is what is described here.

आढ्योऽभिजनवानस्मि कोऽन्योऽस्ति सदृशो मया ।
यक्ष्ये दास्यामि मोदिष्य इत्यज्ञानविमोहिताः ॥ १५ ॥

15. "I am rich and nobly born. Who else is there like unto me? I will perform sacrifices, I will give alms, I will be happy." Thus, deluded by ignorance,

The bad would pass off as far better than what they are. No one, however deliberately unscrupulous he may be in winning the objects of his desire, shuns the glamour of respectability, the flattery of fame. Hypocrisy, wrote Bacon, is the homage which vice pays to virtue. The wicked do not care to be exposed in their true colours. They clothe themselves in garments of virtue and expect to be accorded the respect due to models of integrity and purity. They may think that, though they have earned wealth unfairly and unscrupulously, they can set themselves right with their conscience and with society by applying their wealth to ostentatious worship and pompous acts of charity. In all this, they are actuated not so much by a genuine repentance which will change the character of their lives, as by a love of fame. Even

heartfelt remorse has value only as it moulds the future pattern of our lives. This showy homage to virtue falls far short of that. And of such as these who have guided their lives first by the demands of desire, and then by a greed for fame, can we say that they have acted well and with a knowledge of the true purpose of life? It is evident that they are blinded by ignorance, deluded by wrong ideas about the worthiest object of human attainment. And so, Śrī Kṛishṇa continues, they progress thus.

अनेकचित्तविभ्रान्ता मोहजालसमावृताः ।
प्रसक्ताः कामभोगेषु पतन्ति नरकेऽशुचौ ॥ १६ ॥

16. Bewildered by numerous thoughts, surrounded by a network of delusion, addicted to the gratification of desires, they fall down into impure hell.

A life dedicated to the gratification of desires, is inevitably a life of distraction, of warring aims and purposes. No single aim can animate it and give it strength and direction. As each desire is satisfied, another in full strength rises up. This distraction, this absence of singleness of purpose is due in the main to two reasons. Firstly, a desire, when partially satisfied, loses its strength for the moment and begins to pall upon us. A glutton, heavy with a good dinner, for the time being is not greedy for food. But he may well be actuated by some other desire. The desire for good food has to recoup its energy, before it sways him again. Secondly, no desire can last throughout the life of a man. Variable by nature, it changes from time to time according to the physical and psychological conditions of an individual. People in sound health have desires different from those entertained by invalids. The sight of appetising food may bring nausea on to a sufferer from indigestion. The desires of children are notably different from those of youth and these, again, are hardly similar to those of old age. If you bear these facts in mind, you can see how the votaries of desire are compelled to lead a stormy and distracted life. Having many objects in view, they become confused and bewildered. They do not have the calm and clear intellect which will enable them to grasp the reality of things. Addicted to the gratification of desires, they are caught in the meshes of delusion. And, in the end, they fall down into impure hell. Very soon

Śrī Kṛishṇa explains what He means by this impure hell. No definite locality in space is referred to, no 'other world' in a concrete and material sense. Only a condition or state of life is to be understood, a condition or state which the light of wisdom does not illuminate and which is darkened by delusions about the true ideals of life.

Of the true purpose of life, the goal we have all to strive for, Śrī Kṛishṇa has already spoken to us in great detail. We have been taught to distinguish between the body and the soul, so as to understand that, while the body is changing and mortal, the soul is immutable and immortal. The association of the soul with the body is a forced one, brought about by the influence of *karma*, and has the effect of imposing grave limitations on the powers of the soul to know, to experience and to enjoy. For the soul to attain its freedom, the effect of *karma* has to be neutralised. And this, we all know, may be achieved in various ways. The reality of the soul and its true nature are demonstrated to us in the revealing experience of self-realisation. Further illumination awaits us in the rarer experience of God-realisation. We can thus easily see that the position of the Chārvāka or the atheist, as explained in the eighth stanza of this chapter, is wrong and untenable. The true aim of life, we have been clearly taught, is the attainment of *moksha* or emancipation by the soul, whereby it may free itself from the bondage of matter and enlarge its powers to know the truth and to enjoy supreme bliss. This is the *summum bonum* of life. One who misses this goal strays away into an unworthy and impure condition. It is this condition, which Śrī Kṛishṇa styles as *aśuchi naraka*, impure hell.

आत्मसंभावितास्स्तब्धा धनमानमदान्विताः ।
यजन्ते नामयज्ञैस्ते दम्भेनाविधिपूर्वकम् ॥ १७ ॥

17. Self-conceited, stubborn, filled with the pride and intoxication of wealth, they worship ostentatiously with nominal sacrifices in a manner which is not in accordance with the ordinances of the *Śāstras*.

In this verse, Śrī Kṛishṇa deals further with the ostentatious piety of those who have hoarded wealth by unfair means and who

are actuated by no sense of moral obligation. That they have a high opinion of themselves goes without saying. Having had their fill of pleasures in the first instance, they begin to seek fame by advertising themselves through stately acts of worship and generous gifts to the needy and the poor. It cannot be denied that society, as a whole, benefits by this kind of activity on their part. Money, whether justly or unjustly acquired, always relieves the needy and the poor. A starving mouth can be fed equally well by both. None the less, society, if and when it knows the facts, will disdain to honour the man who follows up a career of merry wrong-doing with a display of pompous piety. There will be always whispers behind his back, allusions to his dark and stormy past. You all know the Tamil proverb which ridicules one who attempts to make amends for his killing a cow with a present of shoes made out of its hide. Can the gift counteract the sin, especially when the gift is made not so much out of repentance as out of a love of fame? Social opinion will refuse to recognise spontaneous generosity or sincere piety in such seekers after public applause. They will be honoured only by themselves, though they may believe themselves to be honoured by all.

Their acts of worship will be only nominal. They betake themselves to religion only to attain respectability. They may conform to the letter of every scriptural ordinance and every religious ritual, but the heart and core of religion will be wanting in their worship. Lacking faith and sincerity, religious ritual is a mockery and a farce. A slavish conformity to the details of religious rites will not save these from being irreligious in the true sense of the term. Essentially, therefore, the piety of these seekers of fame cannot be recognised by the *Śāstras*. However they may succeed in hoodwinking those around them, the watchful eyes of God will see through them and the eternal law of *karma* exact its just retribution. Note especially Śrī Kṛishṇa's description of insincere piety as being against the laws of the *Śāstras*. The practice is prevalent amongst us of starting every act of worship with a *saṅkalpa*, the object of which is to clarify our attitude and ensure that our desire in regard to the performance of the worship is genuine and based on true faith. If the desire is not of this kind, the worshipper would feel that he is untrue to himself.

When the *saṅkalpa* is untrue and unreal, the act of worship cannot be in accordance with the laws and ordinances laid down in the *śāstras*. In other words, insincere worship sins against the spirit of the *śāstras*, even though it may conform in every particular to the letter thereof. The Pharisee cannot taste the fruits of true religion.

अहङ्कारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं च संश्रिताः ।
मामात्मपरदेहेषु प्रद्विषन्तोऽभ्यसूयकाः ॥ १८ ॥

18. Indulging in egotism, (the exercise of) strength, pride, desire and anger, these envious persons hate Me in their own bodies and in those of others.

Some of you may feel inclined to ask why we should question the sincerity of those who seem to turn religious late in life. There is nothing to prevent people from turning their faces towards the light after years of mis-spent life. It is never too late to repent and seek forgiveness at the hands of God. We are, however, here concerned only with those who practise the rites and virtues of religion with a view to self-advertisement. And of these, it must be said that every act of worship that they perform is vitiated by insincerity and is, therefore, against the laws and ordinances of the scriptures. Their fundamental insincerity, Sri Kṛishṇa points out in this stanza, is based upon their refusal to recognise God as He is in themselves and in others, as pervading, penetrating and sustaining everything and every being in the universe. If such persons perform acts of religious worship, they can only be nominal acts of worship. It is impossible to be an atheist and be religious at the same time, or as they say, we cannot simultaneously pay our homage to both God and Mammon. The record of their past shows us the principles on which they have been conducting their lives. And from this, it is easy enough to understand their attitude towards God and their fellow-men.

Suppose we realise that God pervades all things in the manner in which a thread is seen to run through the gems of a necklace; and suppose further that we attune our moral tendencies so as to love God. Under these circumstances, can our life be *kāmāśrita* and *kāma-haituka?* Would we not rather lead a life of *samatva*

and service? If all are the abodes of God, all are equal to one another in the eyes of God. And from this is naturally derived the great ideal of *samatva*, which makes us realise the sorrows and joys of others as our own and impels us to sacrifice our interests for the sake of others. The realisation of the ideal of *samatva* compels us to wear ourselves away in the service of others. And how can there be service without sacrifice, without the power of self-restraint, without mastery over desire? If you are the slave of your passions, how can you render any service to any one at any time? The votaries of desire cannot lead a life of service and sacrifice. That is, they have not realised God in themselves and others. A life which has for its object the gratification of desires, is incompatible with God-realisation or even with faith in God. When a worshipper at the shrine of desire performs religious worship, it is hardly unfair to characterise such worship as merely nominal.

Egotism, pride in strength, desire and anger, these characterise the demoniacal type. And because of their reliance on these, they not merely fail to realise God in themselves and in others, but actually hate the divine. You are already aware that, throughout the *Mahābhārata*, there runs the idea that the still, silent voice within us is the voice of God. When we have realised that the universe is pervaded, supported and sustained by God, it is not difficult to see that He reigns from within our heart and admonishes and advises us through the voice of conscience. This warning voice which commands us through mandates and prohibitions rises up from the deepest layers of our being and makes its presence felt in moments of moral crisis. It is not a syllogism of logic; it does not come to us as the result of argued conviction, but flashes spontaneously across our minds. A distinguished English writer wrote of conscience thus:

> A voice within forbids and summons us to refrain:
> And if we bid it to be silent, it is yet not still.
> It is not in our control.
> It acts without our order, without our asking, against our will.
> It is in us, it belongs to us, but it is not of us: it is above us.
> It is moral, it is intelligent, it is not we, nor at our bidding.
> It pervades mankind as one life pervades the trees.

It has been suggested that it would not be wise to leave people to regulate their conduct in accordance with the dictates of their conscience, because at times conscience may incite some to wrong-doing. This view presents us, however, not with a moral, but with a linguistic or rather a lexicographical difficulty, for arguments such as these understand by conscience something radically different from what we believe it to be. Conscience is that sense of moral judgement within us which leads us to appraise ourselves more often unfavourably than favourably, which impels us to follow disadvantageous virtue rather than advantageous vice. Evil-doers may succeed in almost smothering it out of existence ; but while it continues to exist, it will always operate in favour of virtue and morality. The manner in which it operates may be different in different communities and persons variously circumstanced. It is certainly true that conscience depends on accepted ideas of morality and justice. But, given that these vary from time to time, from country to country, from one state of civilisation to another, it may be observed that conscience prompts men to act up to the accepted rules of justice and righteousness in the society and civilisation to which they may happen to belong. Whatever the community and civilisation we may belong to, whatever may be the code of morality or law, the conception of virtue and duty that may be prevalent, so long as there is some code of morality, idea of justice and rule of virtue, so long our conscience will try to persuade us to follow that code of morality, that rule of virtue, that law of justice.

This is a large question in ethics ; and difficulties appear at every point. It may asked, for instance, whether conscience in general is different from fear of social consequences and whether, in exceptional cases, it is not a form of self-expression, of a will to impose one's own opinions on one's community. Hindu thinkers are quite familiar with the idea of moral codes changing from time to time and from community to community. That is why they speak of *sāmānya-dharmas*, duties for all times and all sorts and conditions of men. That is why, too, the fundamentals of Hindu ethics are based on the enduring reality of the soul. The ideal of *samatva* and the duty of service, as expounded in the *Gītā*, may be seen to be universal in their significance. They hold good for all times and for all states of civilisation. Minor rules of social

behaviour may and often do vary from time to time; but this cannot affect the broad foundations of a sound ethics. We may say, if we like, that the spirit of morality endures always, though its expression varies with changing times and circumstances. And conscience is ever the call of the higher nature of man, of the spirit of justice seated in our souls. Frequently it takes the form of a command to conform to the current moral code; but, occasionally, it rebels against laws and usages that have outlasted their usefulness and have ceased to be in conformity with the foundational laws of ethics. Whatever the circumstances, we are justified in regarding the voice of conscience as the voice of God.

Now, let us take the life of a man who is *kāmāśrita*. Till he succeeds in completely strangling his conscience, at every moment the relentless mentor within will be voicing its protest. Conscience may well seem to him to be a teasing torment, a nagging annoyance, marring his joys and killing his hopes. No wonder that he hates the God within him. If the God who is within his fellow-creatures attracts his homage, he will be induced to lead a life of service and self-sacrifice. When the miseries of others fail to move him in this way, when appeals for help fall on deaf ears, and when the cause of personal advancement leads him to deal with those who stand in his way with ruthless efficiency, then surely it is easy to see that he must be hating the God in others. This hatred, however, cannot kill the God in him or in others. He may hope that, if the calls of conscience are disregarded, a time may come when it will cease to function altogether. But this is never the case. A conscience which appears powerless and weak and which seems to have been put to sleep long ago, is only waiting for its opportunity. And when this arrives, it reasserts itself with tremendous force.

The greater the power with which the conscience is kept crushed down, the greater the force of the ultimate rebound. In the play of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare has portrayed with imaginative splendour the futile war of a powerful will with the voice within. We see the struggle in all its phases from the initial recoil of Macbeth from the foul deed of murdering his king and guest to his dull despair at the end, when life seems to him "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing". All the career

of crime which intervened was only a mistaken effort to restore peace to a mind, continually tormented by a repressed conscience seeking to assert itself. Nothing, however, can kill that God within; none can stalk the world, free of heart and buoyant in spirits, after rebelling against the commands of conscience.

Much less can we kill the God in others. The divine may thus seem to be very inconvenient to those who hold the satisfaction of selfish desires to be the highest ideal in life. Their hatred of God proves harmless against Him. And impotent hatred paves the way for envy. Envying and hating God, they lead lives of egotism, self-confidence, pride and anger. But to what end, to what ultimate purpose? And what is to be their destiny? The answer to these questions is furnished in the next *śloka*, which, with your kind permission, I propose to take up for study next week.

lxx

We were dealing last week with the general characteristics of the people who belong to the *āsuri sṛishṭi*, that is to say, those who cannot or do not choose to rise above the tendencies of the flesh. We learnt something about their philosophy and their code of conduct. Starting with the assumption that the whole universe has no foundation in reality and that it is not supported by God, they arrive at the conclusion that the universe exists for the sole purpose of enabling them and those who think like them to enjoy life in the manner they think best. Holding such an ideal, they hunt after the satisfaction of their desires and the means therefor. In this quest after selfish satisfaction, they are hindered by no scruples; but after attaining a certain amount of success in their career, they begin to court the good opinion of society by pretending to practise the virtues of religion. In reality, they hate God as He manifests Himself in themselves and others. And in addition, they envy Him as well: for hatred, when powerless to wreak harm, ends in envy. The question arises: What is the destiny of those who go on leading selfish and vicious lives in this manner, hating and envying God? That question, Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to answer: and incidentally, in the course of that answer, He also makes clear what His conception of hell is.

तानहं द्विषतः क्रूरान्संसारेषु नराधमान् ।
क्षिपाम्यजस्रमशुभानासुरीष्वेव योनिषु ॥ १९ ॥

19. These enemies, cruel, unholy, the worst of men, throw continually into demoniacal wombs in the worlds f *samsāra.*

Those who are described as enemies here are, of course, the lemoniacal type of people who, we were told, hate God in hemselves and others. The more they hate God, the more they idd to the increasing burden of their *karma*. The reason for their nimical feelings towards God is to be found in the fact that they hink that God stands in the way of their pleasures. To one who aonours the voice of conscience as the voice of God and who ealises the divinity in all beings, a life of selfish pleasures and enjoyments is not possible. The best course of life for him would be the path of *samatva* and service. Those who hate God do not really hate Him so much as the life of sacrifice and unselfish altruism. They know only how to serve what seems on a superficial examination to be their own interests. Mistaking pleasure for happiness, they commit serious blunders in life.

The distinction between pleasure and happiness, or what comes to the same thing, between the pleasant and the good, is well brought out in the *Upanishads*. Even in the *smṛiti* literature, they differentiate between what is *priya* and what is *hita*. It is only when we fail to realise that what is pleasant need not necessarily on that account be good as well, that there is danger of ruin to our moral life. Those who are characterised by demoniacal traits are possessed by the spirit which confounds pleasure with happiness and which recognises no higher good than the satisfaction of desires. Such people would naturally hate anything that stands in the way of their enjoyment and satisfaction. The ideal of *samatva* with all its ethical implications seems to them an obstacle, tending to prevent them from realising the purpose of life ; and as such, they hate the voice of God within themselves and the manifestation of divinity in others with equal fervour. They are thus haters of God, cruel in disposition, the worst among men.

n addition, they are also spoken of as *aśubha*, inauspicious in relation both to themselves and others. For they are the enemies of themselves quite as much as of the world.

To them, it is stated here, the Lord awards the punishment of recurring births and deaths in the world of *saṃsāra*. Life in this world must be looked upon as a means to an ultimate end. If it is a legitimate question to ask why at all souls should have been compelled to sojourn here and if one may venture to speculate on the purpose of God in maintaining and guiding the process of the universe, with any hope of catching the faintest glimmering of truth, then it may be suggested that the life of *saṃsāra* is something in the nature of a training-ground for the soul, a gymnasium where it acquires strength, self-restraint and the power to make self-sacrifice. It is, of course, somewhat like a prison-house in that the powers of the soul are curtailed and limited. But then prisons are intended to serve as reformatories, to teach the erring criminals good citizenship and sound social virtues. The discipline of the prison, however, sometimes acts in a contrary way; it fails to act as a corrective, but tends to harden the prisoners and make them impenitent. Even so in some cases the discipline of *saṃsāra*, instead of acting as a chastening influence, leads only to a fall before temptations. To such the world of discipline becomes a world of bondage. They emerge from one prison-house of flesh only to enter into another.

At the beginning of this chapter, we learnt of the division of humanity into the divine and the demoniacal groups, the former born with tendencies that are naturally helpful to a life of purity and self-restraint, the latter inheriting traits that make for selfish and impure lives. Now, I think it may be said that the large majority of men are more demoniacal than divine. I do not say that the world is peopled by wantonly wicked men. There can only be a small number of people whom we can describe as deliberately and almost irredeemably bad. Fewer still are by nature fitted to lead a life of service and sacrifice, and thus become the great exemplars of morality for all. Of the large majority, who belong to neither of these groups, it can only be said that they are likely to prefer pleasure and enjoyment to renunciation and service.

If men are left to themselves, if they are guided in their conduct by the promptings of flesh, they will be born again and again in this world. And by the burden of their *karma*, they will be compelled to be born of parents who cause them to inherit tendencies not favourable to a life of *samatva* and service. They will be handicapped in their struggle for salvation ; handicapped by obstacles they have themselves created. These obstacles, though they spring up as the natural consequences of their deeds, may yet be looked upon as the punishment awarded to them by God for their wilful wrong-doing. They are the architects of their own ruin ; but the Lord sees to it that the inevitable fruits of their sins reach them. *Naraka* is really birth in evil wombs, and all the suffering that it entails. To be born again and again of parents who transmit evil qualities to their offspring—such is the hell wherein misguided souls suffer.

आसुरीं योनिमापन्ना मूढा जन्मनि जन्मनि ।
मामप्राप्यैव कौन्तेय ततो यान्त्यधमां गतिम् ॥ २० ॥

20. Fallen into demoniacal wombs, deluded in birth after birth, they go down to the lowest state, O Arjuna, without attaining Me at all.

If some souls are born in this manner again and again from demoniacal wombs, they become progressively burdened more and more with undesirable tendencies against morality, self-discipline and self-realisation. And those who are born in the *āsurī* group are naturally deluded, as they lack the power of philosophic discrimination that would enable them to distinguish what is good from what is merely pleasant. It is only when they understand that whatever is good need not be pleasant and that what is good may be either pleasant or painful, that they can be free from delusion. Seeing that they are born with qualities and tendencies that must prevent them from making this distinction, they must be regarded as remaining deluded in birth after birth.

Now think of a soul which abuses its opportunities in life and is in consequence born out of parents who impose on it a disposition not at all favourable for the attainment of liberation.

In this state of reincarnation, it is manifestly in a worse state than before. Progressing in this manner, it will recede farther and farther away from God in birth after birth. There is a progressive deterioration of the powers of the soul; its capacity to realise God and its own essentially free nature becomes less and less. Suppose a man is sent to prison for having committed a serious crime. There, of course, he is subjected to a rigorous discipline. Now let us imagine that there also he commits offences against the discipline of the jail. What will happen to him? It is certain that harsher restraints will be imposed on him. He may be tried for breaking the regulations of the prison and sentenced to a further term of imprisonment. If wisdom drawns on him after this, all will be well in the end. But if he should still prove refractory, further restraints will be put on him and a further sentence may also be passed. A spirit utterly unyielding and recalcitrant will thus succeed only in postponing the day of freedom; there is no chance of liberty till it reforms itself.

The position of the reincarnating soul is very much similar to that of a criminal sentenced to a term of imprisonment. In its state of embodiment, the soul has the choice, broadly speaking, between two courses of action. It may realise the error of its ways and set about attaining its own salvation, like the prisoner who turns over a new leaf after expiating his misconduct by a term of imprisonment. Or it may persist in wilful wrong-doing and go on strengthening its own bondage, even as those refractory prisoners who break prison regulations and are sentenced to further and further terms of imprisonment. If the soul chooses the latter alternative, in its next state of reincarnation it will be born with an endowment less favourable to self-realisation and God-realisation. Veil after veil of darkness will shut it off from the light of truth. And if this kind of progress continues, it may be that the soul will never attain salvation.

It is well to note here that there is no necessity for thinking that the plan and purpose of God include the abandonment of some souls to eternal perdition of this kind. Śrī Kṛishṇa is only anxious, it appears to me, to impress upon us the serious consequences that may flow from our refusal to distinguish

between pleasure and goodness. So long as we continue to act in this manner, there is no hope of freedom for us. Indeed, all the time we succeed only in binding ourselves more securely with ever stronger and stronger chains.

त्रिविधं नरकस्यैतद् द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः ।
कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्त्रयं त्यजेत् ॥ २१ ॥

21. Threefold is this pathway to hell, ruinous to the soul—desire, wrath and covetousness. Therefore, let man give up these three.

The hell whose meaning I sought to explain above has three doorways through which you may enter into it easily. Traversing any of these, one may succeed in ruining the destiny of one's soul. Nothing, of course, can annihilate the soul, for it is immortal. The ruin, the destruction that is spoken of here can relate only to the chances of its regaining its own freedom. Notice now that the "three gateways" are closely related to one another. If you have any one of these three qualities, you are sure to have the other two as well. Desire is the parent and anger the child of disappointment. Likewise, desire is the parent of covetousness as well; for it is the nature of desire never to be satisfied. As *kāma* is illimitable and insatiable, we covet more and more of the means for the satisfaction of desire, and thus become covetous. *Kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha* are thus so closely interrelated that each of them is capable of giving rise to the other two. And each of them by itself is sufficient to ruin the destiny of the soul and condemn it to the toils of *saṁsāra*.

Therefore, says Śrī Kṛishṇa, give up these three. In fact, if you give up one, you will be practically giving up all the three. I mention this just because it may well appear that Śrī Kṛishṇa is demanding of us something formidable in asking us to launch a frontal attack simultaneously on the most tenacious and the most insidious of our evil qualities. But, as a matter of fact, you may begin wherever it seems to you most convenient. Try to give up whatever is easiest to you; you will soon find that you are conquering all the three vices. When you give up these three, you will be redeemed from hell; that is, you will be reborn with tendencies that will aid you in your struggle for salvation.

एतैर्विमुक्तः कौन्तेय तमोद्वारैस्त्रिभिर्नरः ।
आचरत्यात्मनः श्रेयस्ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥ २२ ॥

22. A man who has escaped from these three ways to darkness, O Arjuna, works out his own good and reaches the supreme goal.

'*Tamas*' literally means darkness, but figuratively it is often used to denote ignorance in regard to whatever is the ultimate truth about the realities of the universe, as also in regard to the proper course of conduct in life which is in fact nothing other than the right adjustment of life to those realities. '*Tamas*' is also the name of one of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. The meaning is clear, whether we understand it in the sense of the darkness of ignorance clouding the light of truth, or as the least desirable among the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. You are all aware, of course, that all the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* influence our lives, though only one of them is predominant in the life of any one of us. The life of desire and enjoyment will force us to be born again and again, so that at every new birth we are burdened with stronger and stronger tendencies against the life of selflessness which alone can lead to salvation. Translated into the language of Sāṅkhya, this is the same as saying that the persistent pursuit of desire and enjoyment will make the preponderance of the *tamo-guṇa* more and more manifest, as the soul gets into embodiment after embodiment. The life that is swayed by any one of these three qualities is really at the gates of hell.

The fact that the expression, '*tamo-dvāra*', is here equated to '*naraka-dvāra*' ought to enable us to understand what really is meant by '*naraka*' here. It is quite clear that no separate world localised in space and time is alluded to. Popular religion all the world over has spread tales of torment in another world to induce obedience to the rules of morality. Hell has always been the *ultima ratio* of virtuous conduct. Our *purāṇas* have given us many descriptions of the abodes of punishment for the wicked. The cosmogony of the Buddhists also makes provision for worlds of suffering and torture for the sinful. The Christian hell, with its eternal fires, "fed with ever burning sulphur unconsumed," is

believed by some modern critics to be an idea derived from a valley near Jerusalem, "where some of the Israelites sacrificed their children to Moloch, and which, on this account, was afterwards regarded as a place of abomination and made a receptacle for all the refuse of the city, perpetual fires being kept up to prevent pestilential effluvia".

The *Vedānta* has no need for special worlds of torture constructed by God with such meticulous attention to the details of horror for the benefit of erring souls. Even the hells of our *purāṇas* are temporary houses of correction for the expiation of past sins, the duration and horrors of life therein being determined by the nature and magnitude of the sins committed. However, from the higher standpoint of the *Vedānta*, the misery of life here on earth and the bondage of the soul constitute a sufficient punishment for the most heinous of sins. "Those whose conduct has been good will attain good birth," says the *Chhāndogya-Upanishad* (v. 4.7), "but those whose conduct has been evil will quickly attain an evil birth." There can be no worse hell than what men manufacture for themselves in life. All that we are told of distinct worlds of torment may well be regarded as a figurative representation of what actually takes place here.

If you live your life well, worthily, honourably and dedicated to the cause of *samatva* and service, your soul will gather strength to break the fetters that bind it and to win its freedom from the limiting and restricting influence of its contact with matter. If your life, however, is one of pleasures and desires, then the freedom of the soul is as far away as ever. It will be thrown once again into the whirl of *samsāra*, sentenced, as it were, to another term of imprisonment in an embodiment, and subjected to a more rigorous ordeal. If it chooses continually to misuse the opportunities of life, it will be subjected to harsher and harsher disciplines, as birth succeeds birth. The light of knowledge will become dimmer and dimmer. This life of ignorance, of animalism, in which the interests of the soul are subordinated to those of the flesh—this life is really hell. Life, indeed, is full of suffering for all, but to one who can realise the nature of the bliss and freedom that await the liberated soul, the life of delusion and senseless pursuit of desire must seem worse than infernal in the miseries it entails.

So, if one is free from *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha*, then one has turned away from the paths leading to darkness. Just as the man who is at the beck and call of his lower nature, becomes worse and worse until he reaches the lowest state, even so one who has risen above desire and passion and covetousness works out his own good and reaches at last the supreme goal.

Implicitly, Śrī Kṛishṇa raises here a very important question, the question, namely, of the right manner in which men are to lead their lives. We are all mixed in nature, the battle-fields between the forces of light and darkness. The so-called higher self—the voice of conscience, the call of duty, the overwhelming obligation of self-sacrifice—directs us in one way ; the demands of desire and the relish after enjoyment drag us in another direction. These conflicting and contrarious tendencies exist in all of us; their relative strength, of course, varies with individuals. While being thus kin to both the brute and the divine, man always finds it easy and convenient to yield to the promptings of the flesh. The pursuit of the good often involves pain ; the pleasant is always attractive. And it is quite in keeping with human nature as it is, to prefer the pleasant to the good. But if we allow ourselves to be swayed by our lower selves and become subject to *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha*, we are bound to get into the Inferno of reincarnation and bondage to matter. The best course of conduct for us is, however, prescribed to us in the *śāstras*, whose mandates we may reject only at our peril.

यः शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारतः ।
न स सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम् ॥ २३ ॥

23. Whoever disdaining the commands of the *śāstras* lives under the influence of desire, does not attain perfection, nor happiness, nor the supreme goal.

Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to point out that in matters of conduct the authority for us is the *śāstra*, the revealed and authoritative scripture. The word, '*śāstra*', as you are aware, is derived from the root, *śas*, to command. Its etymological meaning is, therefore, 'that which commands'. Whatever authoritatively commands us in matters of conduct is *śāstra*.

Every community in the world which has endeavoured in the course of its history to lead a life of virtue, has its own authoritative scripture for regulating its ethical ideals. How does *śāstra* acquire this authority? What is the sanction behind scriptural mandates and prohibitions in morality? One of the ways—and it is a very short-sighted way—of establishing the authority of the scripture is to say that the scripture is a direct revelation of the will of God to man and as such must needs be obeyed. This argument is well-known to every religion that has holy books of its own. We speak of the *Veda* as being divinely revealed. To the Christian, the authentic will of God is made manifest in the Bible. The Koran is held in similar sanctity by the Moslem. Even to the Buddhist who professes no positive faith in any deity, the *ipsissima verba* of the Enlightened One glow with inspiration.

What after all is this inspiration? Why is peculiar sanctity attached to the words of these great teachers of mankind, the mystics, the sages and the founders of religions? In all their cases, we find that inspiration came to them unbidden, that suddenly and without any conscious effort of their own, they felt themselves uplifted to regions of ecstasy where the secret of the universe and the riddle of existence were laid bare before their vision. And ever since, they felt the urge to shoulder the responsibility of a mission to promulgate and propagate the truths that they learnt in this almost miraculous manner. It is as though some extraneous Power chose them as the channels of a Revelation Even to the Buddha who acknowledged no deity, the radiant vision of truth appeared suddenly and without forewarnings of any kind. Now, from the standpoint of the personal feelings of these original discoverers of ethical truth, it may seem an obvious fact that God has revealed to them commandments of conduct.

Let us, however, try to understand what this means to us from our point of view. Śrī Kṛishṇa has been telling us repeatedly that the life of *samatva* and service is derived logically from the illumining experiences of self-realisation and God-realisation. Any one who has not this ideal before him is leading a faulty and imperfect life. It is, of course, open for us to strive to attain these experiences, but they presuppose a certain psychological and

spiritual discipline. So long as we do not have these experiences ourselves, we are asked to accept the authority of those who have had them in matters of conduct. Our life is after all regulated by authority in most respects. If, for instance, we want to protect our house from lightning, we take the advice of an expert in lightning conductors. In a like manner, the *yogin* is an expert on the nature of the soul and its relations with the world around. Free from bias and disinterested, he teaches us what the right course of conduct for us is. Presumably he, too, must have been like us in the past, ignorant and selfish. Having risen thence to a higher state, he speaks with knowledge and authority. There is no reason why his advice should be other than disinterested any more than that of the scientific expert on lightning conductors.

Śāstra is, therefore, sometimes described as *pathya-vākya*, wholesome and salutary advice intended exclusively for our own good. It is the commands of those who have our welfare at heart, and who consequently teach us what is good rather than what is delusively pleasant. The scripture does not speak to us sugared words, it does not set us on the primrose path to eventual perdition. Its theme may not be *priya*, but it is undoubtedly *hita* and *pathya*. We may thus derive the authority of the *śāstra* from the rare insight and uncommon knowledge of the founders of religions and propounders of moral codes, who have every right to be regarded as specialists and experts on the science of conduct. Ultimately, we must trace their genius to the inflow of divine energy into them. They are special manifestations of the power and glory of God and spring from out of His resplendent energy (x. 41).

It is in this way that we must try to understand the cause for the authority traditionally ascribed to the *śāstras*. To obey their commands in matters of conduct is no more irrational than to follow the advice of an expert in science or medicine. The philosophy of conduct taught by the *śāstras* is based on experiences that give us an insight into the nature of our selves and of the right kind of relations that we ought to maintain with the universe. It teaches what is *pathya*, for it leads us to the goal of supreme and unending bliss. Any other code of conduct, however convenient and attractive it may seem at first sight, can

only lead to a series of births and deaths, during the course of which our capacity to live the higher life will be weakened more and more. Therefore, one who teaches the life of sacrifice, *samatva* and service is our true friend ; his word is *śāstra*, for unpolluted by any kind of interested motives, it is rightly related to the truth of things. Hence we may come to the conclusion that what the *dharmajñas* have taught us in regard to conduct is *pramāṇa* or authoritative; and that the *Vedas*, being *pathya-vākya*, are to be taken as authoritative.

The need for an authoritative scripture of some kind, which is capable of commanding conduct, is universally recognised. In the turmoil of life, with our whole nature rent and split by the conflicting demands of the spirit and the flesh, we feel the necessity for something to look up to, some authority that will help us to solve our moral perplexities and give us inner peace and harmony. Left to ourselves, we are prone to hanker after comfort, ease and pleasure, and attach no weight to any other considerations. The felt authority of universally recognised commandments of scripture is not merely a guide in hours of need, it is also a perpetual inducement to follow the higher life. It is the beacon-light of wisdom, lighting the darkness of the moral wilderness in which men find themselves, and beckoning them on to endless progress.

What is it that scriptural commandments all the world over have taught? Take them in all ages and in all countries. Study the teachers of the various kinds of religion that the world has known. What is in essence the teaching of Śrī Kṛishṇa, of Christ, of the Buddha, of Mahomet? There is a marked unanimity amongst them all in regard to matters of moment, in spite of varying cultural heritage and social environment. All great teachers have taught that right conduct must be based on selflessness, *samatva* and sacrifice. The authority for these commandments, though derived from the experience of the great sages, is generally regarded as superhuman, the communication to the chosen of the laws of God. That superhuman authority may be variously named, called Vāsudeva or Alla or Jehova. Though everywhere such commandments have been operative, they have differed in numerous points of detail. The greater the capacity of a community to live the life of *samatva* and service, the more

humane will be its moral regulations. But, however they may differ, through them all runs, as a golden streak, the idea of the imperative obligation of selflessness, of the necessity to sacrifice the interest of one's self for the sake of the commonweal.

Left to himself, man cannot realise this fundamental law of ethics. Even when he knows the better, he is always prompted to do the worse. And once he enters the downward path to darkness, it is very difficult for him to set his face towards the light streaming from above. For weakness and sin cling to him like habits, they grow from strength to strength. The more one sins, the more likely is one to sin again. The sinner is like a man who is slipping down a precipice to a destination he cannot see with a velocity increasing every moment. Hence it is that we need some help to arrest this downward progress, someone to give us his hands and to lift us beyond ourselves. In a famous hymn, Śaṅkarāchārya prays to the Lord to give him *karāvalambhaṃ*, the gracious help of uplifting hands. And so everywhere men have risen, sages and prophets, who struggled to understand the mysteries of ethics and cut a way for themselves through the tangled jungle of human motives and impulses. Achieving self-realisation and God-realisation, they have taught us the great law of equality, by following which all men can attain salvation. These, along with their true followers, constitute the *daivī sṛishṭi* ; and to them we must turn for guidance in conduct. Their teachings are *śāstra*, their example is an inspiration for all and an incentive to work out our own salvation. In this storm-tossed sea of *saṃsāra*, man has thus at his disposal a certain help for finding direction and harbourage in the *śāstra*. But one who disdains the commands of the *śāstras* and lives a life prompted by his own lower nature, cannot attain perfection, nor win true happiness, nor achieve the supreme destiny of his own soul.

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ ।
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ॥ २४ ॥

24. Therefore, the *Śāstra* is your authority in determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Knowing what has been declared by the ordinances of the *Śāstra*, it behoves you to act here.

After demonstrating that the *śāstra* is the authority for us in matters of conduct, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to apply it to the case of Arjuna. How do the authoritative commands of the *śāstras* help Arjuna to solve his moral perplexities? They declare that it is the duty of a warrior to fight on behalf of justice and righteousness. Having enlisted himself on the side of justice, Arjuna must not give up his duty, however painful it may become. Pleasure is not the end of life. It need not, and frequently is not coincident with goodness and duty. It certainly is not pleasant to have to kill one's kinsmen, friends and teachers, but the *śāstra* says that a warrior who has enlisted himself in the ranks of an army fighting to safeguard righteousness, cannot, when that cause is in danger, fly from his post of duty. Śrī Kṛishṇa says to Arjuna in effect: "Do not hesitate, fight. The *śāstra* is your authority, for it teaches you your conduct better even than your inclinations. If you had not enlisted yourself in an army fighting on behalf of righteousness, and had thus taken upon yourself the duties of a soldier, you would not have been called upon to perform this painful task. But you are by birth and training qualified to be a soldier. You have been a great warrior in the past. Now, in order to establish righteousness and to terminate the reign of flaunting vice, you have joined an army. It is your duty to fight in the war which is imminent, and to do your best to lead your army to victory. You are not pursuing a personal quarrel; the fight is between the forces of light and darkness. Eschew, therefore, all personal considerations and do your duty, irrespective of the pleasure or the pain it may bring you, and irrespective, too, of the ultimate issue of your action Do your duty and rest content."

This brings us to the end of the sixteenth chapter, and here we may stop our work for the day.

CHAPTER XVII

lxxi

दैवासुरविभागोक्तिपूर्विका शास्त्रवश्यता ।
तत्त्वानुष्ठानविज्ञानस्थेम्ने षोडश उच्यते ॥

With the object of firmly establishing the knowledge of the practice of truth, submission to the *śāstras* is taught in the sixteenth (chapter) after making known the distinction between the divine and the demoniacal.

So runs Yāmunāchārya's summary of the sixteenth chapter whose study we concluded last week. You may see how this makes clear the manner in which the authority of the *śāstras* in matters of conduct is brought to the fore. Why such an authority is necessary for us and why man cannot be left free to regulate his conduct are demonstrated to us by taking into consideration the nature of man. From the standpoint of moral behaviour, we learnt, humanity may be divided roughly into two groups, those who are born with a special kind of fitness for leading the righteous and moral life, and those who are not so born. The latter were described as the *āsurī sṛishṭi*, and the former as the *daivī sṛishṭi*.

Those belonging to the demoniacal group believe that the universe is unreal, that it is unsupported by anything higher than what is visible or perceptible, and that there is no God. And so they come to the conclusion that the sole purpose for which the universe exists is to enable men to satisfy their desires. Holding such an ideal before themselves, they set out, not on the high adventure of seeking the *summum bonum* so eloquently described in the fifteenth chapter, but on the puerile quest after the pleasures of this world and the invariably concomitant sorrows and disappointments. This kind of attachment to the pleasures of this world tends to make the soul of man powerless to break itself free from the bondage that holds it in subjection. On the other hand, it makes that bondage stronger and more secure. For one bound in this manner to the chariot-wheels of *samsāra*, it would be very difficult to work out his salvation without the commanding

authority of the *śāstra*. The large majority of men are prone to be selfish and sensual, they are without foresight or wisdom. Left to themselves, they would wallow for ever in the petty joys of *samsāra* and never strive for the liberation of their souls.

If the higher nature within us is to be obeyed, then we must have some authority like the *śāstra* compelling our homage with all the weight of tradition, of social acceptance, and more than all, of truth. The source of that authority may be various, the scriptures commanding obedience may be different. For both social happiness and individual salvation, it is essential to have the controlling authority of a *śāstra* which asserts the supremacy of the spirit over the flesh and urges men on to the narrow path of virtue, sharp and fine as the edge of a razor. The way to peace and blessedness is through humble submission to the imperative mandates of the *śāstras*. But whoever disdains the authority of the *śāstras* and places himself at the disposal of his own desires can never attain the supreme goal of life (XVI. 23).

At this point, the question naturally arises whether the spirit or the letter of the *śāstras* is more important, whether it is absolutely essential to conform to the details of orthodox ritualism or whether it is enough to have an outlook on life broadly similar to that of the *śāstras*. This question, though, perhaps, in a different form, Arjuna proceeds to ask Śrī Kṛishṇa at the very commencement of the seventeenth chapter.

अर्जुन उवाच—

ये शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तमः ॥ १ ॥

ARJUNA SAID :

1. Those who, giving up the ordinances of the scripture, worship with faith—what is their state, O Krishṇa? Is it (one of) *sattva*, or (of) *rajas*, or (of) *tamas*?

Here we have a class of people whom we did not take into consideration in the sixteenth chapter. There two classes of men

were referred to, those who obey the *śāstras* and lead the higher life, and those who disdain the authority of the *śāstras* and live a vicious and worthless life. But this classification is not exhaustive; it does not include all possible types. Take the case of the typical rationalist who is interested in the higher values of life. The *śāstras* of antiquity speak to him in an outworn and obsolete language. They do not appeal to him; their commands do not seem to him to possess the compelling authority of reason. He may have faith of some kind, for even scepticism has to rest somewhere. But that faith need not be the same as that which is advocated by the *śāstras*. Take, again, the case of the considerable number of people who are heterodox, who refuse to subscribe to the authority of the orthodox scripture, but live worthy and honourable lives. All these cannot be called bad or vicious. They may and frequently do lead morally praiseworthy lives. They are not atheists, believing in no values higher than the satisfaction of sensual and selfish desires. They live the higher life, though they do not consciously place themselves under the guidance of the *śāstras*. They are truly religious, they worship with faith. They are sincere and honest, and do not parade their religion for the sake of publicity.

In the modern days of scientific enlightenment, we have a large number of such men in our society, and, indeed, in any society where there is culture and lively intellectual curiosity. Men having no faith in the traditional *śāstras*, but leading upright and honourable lives, full of faith in religion, righteousness and morality, present a problem which has to be faced boldly by all those who advocate the authority of the *śāstras*. Suppose you live the right kind of life, because you have faith in the sovereign authority of the *śāstras*. And suppose you have a friend who has no faith in the *śāstras*, but who lives a life of virtue, righteousness and self-restraint, because he sincerely believes in that kind of life as the best. Is this man living a life which is by all standards worthy and honourable, or is he beyond redemption on account of his want of faith in the *śāstras*? This is not a new question, something peculiar to our own times or to our country. Readers of Dante's *Divine Comedy* can imagine for themselves the difficulties of the great Catholic poet in his attempts to assign the proper position for

the illustrious thinkers of pre-Christian Greece and Rome in his hierarchies of Heaven and Hell. As they were predecessors of Christ, they could not be called Christians, and orthodox dogma made it plain that Heaven could be attained only by Christians believing in Christ. There, too, a similar problem arose, and even the large charity of the poet's heart could secure for them only an honourable and comfortable position on the outskirts of Hell.

So far as I understand the teaching in this chapter, I believe that Śrī Kṛishṇa tackles this problem with His characteristic tolerance and generosity. In the course of this chapter, He classifies *yajña*, the life of religion or worship, under the three categories of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. And we are asked to judge all men by the nature of their *yajñas*. It appears to me that He understands by *yajña* the nature of the life you lead—the kind of restraints you put upon yourself, the kind of worship that you perform, the kind of gifts that you give and even the kind of food that you eat. All these make up the life of religion that you lead. Each of these is taken up for consideration in turn and classified as *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*. The underlying idea evidently is that a life of true religion must affect all aspects of life.

श्री भगवानुवाच—

त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।
सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां शृणु ॥ २ ॥

ŚRĪ KṚISHṆA SAID:

2. The faith of men is of three kinds in accordance with their nature, *sāttvika, rājasa* and *tāmasa.* Hear about it.

First, Śrī Kṛishṇa takes up the question of faith. This threefold classification of faith is an amplification of the division of mankind into the divine and the demoniacal groups. The previous classification rested on the assumption that character and conduct are in a large measure matters of inheritance. The same idea is here restated from the standpoint of the faith that men have

Everyone believes in what he was born to believe in. It is a matter of inherited tastes and capacities and is dependent on the physical, mental and moral constitutions of men. And as these are determined at birth, faith is also practically an inherited legacy. And this faith is of three kinds, even as the constitutions of men are threefold. The quality of one's faith, we may say, is an index of the quality of the individual himself. Śrī Kṛishṇa makes this abundantly clear in the next verse.

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥ ३ ॥

3. The faith of all, O Arjuna, is in accordance with their dispositions. Man here is of the nature of his faith. Whatever that faith is, that he is indeed.

The faith of every one is in consonance with his or her natural disposition. It is dependent on what one is. If you know what a man's faith is, you can make a sure guess about the nature of the man himself. Man, we may say, is made up of his faith—*śraddhāmayo purushaḥ*. What exactly does this mean? When I say that this table before me is made up of wood, I mean that there is in it nothing of value other than the wood of which it is made. Similarly, when we say that a man is made up of his faith, we must understand that there is nothing more valuable within him than the faith which actuates him. As a man's faith is, so he is. This is an idea which is well worth pondering over. What we are, is dependent on the thoughts that we think, the desires that we entertain and the work that we do. And these in turn are determined by the nature of the ideals in which we put our faith. This is true all the world over and in all periods of history. Contrariwise, the nature of your faith also shapes your conduct. As they say, faith moulds manners. If you put your faith in a noble and worthy ideal and endeavour to act up to your faith, then, in spite of occasional failures, you will be a better man for having lived that life. Therefore it behoves us all to take care of our ideals, of our aims and aspirations. Let us see that our ideals lead us to a life of self-restraint, self-sacrifice and service, and not to one of selfishness and love of pleasures.

Now faith is classified into three types. If a man is characterised by the *sāttvika* faith, he is *sāttvika*; if he is possessed of the *rājasa* faith, he is *rājasa*; and similarly, if his faith is of the *tāmasa* quality, he is also of a like nature. Of whatever quality the faith of a man is, of that same quality is the man as a whole. Presently we will be taught the several characteristics and attributes of these three kinds of faith. By knowing them, we will be in a position to shape our ideals correctly. With that object in view, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to delineate the three kinds of faith.

यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान् यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।
प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥ ४ ॥

4. Those who are *sāttvika* worship the gods; those who are *rājasa* worship *Yakshas* and *Rakshasas*. And other men who are *tāmasa*, worship the dead and the hosts of spirits.

Students of comparative religion will be in a position to understand that the classification made here corresponds to different types of religion known to history. There is first the kind of religion which is based on faith in either a God or a plurality of gods, a religion which is theistic. Then there is magical religion, which may be subdivided into the religion of white magic and the religion of black magic. The former of these is directed to the satisfaction of benevolent genii with the object of selfish advancement. It is, therefore, *rājasa*. The cult of black magic is intended for evil ends. It is practised when the ruin of others, the death of enemies and such like malignant objectives are in view. It is, therefore, the worst type of religion and is deservedly characterised as *tāmasa*. In this way, by dividing religion into the theistic and the magical, and by effecting a subdivision of the magical religion into a superior and an inferior type, we can make the three kinds of religion, *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*, correspond to the forms of faith known to the study of comparative religion.

Please notice that here we are dealing with a classification of men according to the faiths that they hold. And the kind of faith

which actuates any one of them is something that is natural and inborn; it is not artificially implanted. The lives that they live are more or less governed by natural impulses proceeding from within.

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।
दम्भाहङ्कारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥ ५ ॥

कर्शयन्तश्शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः ।
मां चैवान्तश्शरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यासुरनिश्चयान् ॥ ६ ॥

5. Those men who perform terrible penances not ordained by the *Śāstras*, who are full of vanity and pride, who are impelled by the force of desire and attachment,

6. Who lack the power of discrimination, who starve the collection of elements in the body and (who starve) Me also dwelling within the body—know them to have resolves that are demoniacal.

Śrī Kṛishṇa here tells us what kind of life is to be associated with resolves that are demoniacal, that is to say, with a faith which is *tāmasa*. Men who undergo strange penances and subject themselves to terrible mortifications for purposes that are selfish and harmful, are condemned here. They lack the power of discrimination, they act under the directive force of desire. Notice the expression, '*kāma-rāga-balānvitāḥ*'. '*Kāma*' is desire, the love of pleasure. '*Rāga*' indicates something slightly different; it implies the operation of the will in relation to the love of pleasure. The desire that prompts you to act is *kāma*; the will power directed in obedience to the dictates of desire is *rāga*. *Kāma* and *rāga* can give one a certain amount of strength and power. Think of a man ardently in love with a girl. For the sake of that love, he may do deeds that he would not otherwise have done. The power of that love will help him to overcome all obstacles standing in the way.

Subject to these influences, the men of demoniacal resolves starve and torment the physical body. It is foolish to think that mere mortification of the flesh can give us power and lead us to

salvation. There is a distinction between self-control and meaningless mortification. Impatient critics of Hinduism who see in our higher ethics only a call to revolt against the world and subject oneself to all kinds of self-torture, conveniently ignore this, and seem blissfully ignorant of this passage in the *Gītā*. Merely because the body is forced to go through a fantastically rigorous discipline, one does not get holy or spiritually illuminated. Fancy a young man in love, refusing food and starving himself to death in the hope that his suit may succeed. It is as foolish to win the grace of God by stupidly observing meaningless austerities, while the fountain-springs of thought and conduct remain polluted. While the body in this way is made to suffer, the *antaryāmin* within also is teased and troubled.

Of course, the God within is not a physical concept ; and you cannot starve Him as you can starve your body. The underlying idea is something quite different. I have already told you how the promptings of conscience are conceived in the *Gītā* (and in Hinduism generally) to be the utterances of the voice of God. The *tāmasa* individual lives a life which is heedless of the commands of the mentor within. Frequently, men know the better and do the worse ; and every time this happens, the voice of conscience goes unheeded. In this manner, one may harden oneself against the dictates of conscience ; in other words, one may, so to speak, render the *antaryāmin* within weak and feeble. It is thus that we have to understand the starving of the God within. No doubt there is a correlation between the performance of horrible penances and the blunting of the moral sense ; the former may so distort one's sense of values as to lead to the latter. But it is well to remember that while one is a physical, the other is a spiritual phenomenon.

आहारस्त्वपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रियः ।
यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमं शृणु ॥ ७ ॥

7. The food dear to all is also of three kinds, and so too (are) worship, penance and charity. Hear about their distinction.

We have learnt that it is possible for us to find out whether a man is *sāttvika*, *rājasa* or *tāmasa* by the kind of life that he

lives. Now, Śrī Kṛishṇa tells us that in trying to judge the quality of an individual's life, we have to take into consideration the acts of worship that he performs, the restraints that he imposes on himself and the discipline to which he subjects himself in thought, word and deed, the generosity that he displays and the food that he eats. The conduct of a man indicates his faith, and *vice versa*, the faith of a man indicates his conduct. The two are closely interrelated. Here we are taught the means by which we can make out the nature of a man from salient features of his behaviour.

आयुस्सत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धनाः ।
रस्यास्स्निग्धास्स्थिरा हृद्या आहारास्सात्त्विकप्रियाः ॥ ८ ॥

8. Foods that promote longevity, goodness, strength, health, happiness and pleasure, that are juicy, rich, nourishing and agreeable are dear to the *sāttvika*.

You may remember the discussion we had some time ago on the relation between the nature of the food eaten and the moral temperament of an individual. The kind of food that we eat affects us physically, psychologically and morally. It is under the influence of this belief that our *śāstras* have prescribed for us rules regarding the food that we ought to eat. Here we are told the characteristics of the best kind of food, that is to say, the food which is concomitant with a *sāttvika* outlook on life. You will notice in this description a blending of physical, moral and emotional effects. And that is quite in accordance with the declaration of the *Upanishads* that the purity of our physical constitution depends on the purity of our food and that this in turn leads to the strengthening of the powers of the soul. (*Vide* p. 157 *supra*.) One special point of interest in this verse is the distinction that is implied between '*sukha*' and '*prīti*'. We may take '*prīti*' to be the feeling of pleasure at the time of eating and '*sukha*' as the feeling of satisfaction afterwards. There are many kinds of food that give pleasure at the time of eating, but cause acute injuries to health later. These, of course, cannot be held to be *sāttvika* in character. Most of us, it is true, prefer *prīti* to *sukha*, the pleasure of the moment to enduring health and happiness. But that does not alter the fact that the most desirable kind of food is that which is pleasant to taste, nourishing,

healthful and satisfactory in all ways. Regulating our diet in this manner, we will enjoy physical health, and a sound mind being in a sound body, intellectual and moral health as well.

कट्वम्ललवणात्युष्णतीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः ।
आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः ॥ ९ ॥

9. The foods dear to the *rājasa* are astringent, sour, saltish, very hot, pungent, burning and dry, producing pain, grief and disease.

The food dear to the *sāttvikas*, it was stated, promotes health, pleasure and happiness. In contrast, we are told here that the *rājasa* type of food tends to produce pain, grief and ill-health. This kind of food has a strong hold on people who have cultivated a taste for it. It appears to be a somewhat morbid kind of taste, depending for its existence on some kind of nervous excitement. Take the case of a man who is fond of hot and pungent food. By its very nature, that type of food is bound to produce acute physical discomfort at the time of eating and numerous ill-effects afterwards. Yet he eats it with evident relish. He feels that he is enjoying something when water is streaming out of his eyes and the tongue is livid and burning. The relish for the food is determined by one's nature; but the pain or the pleasure that is felt at the time of eating is determined by the nature of the food eaten. We can account for the taste for such things as chillies only in this way. So, in spite of the *duḥkha* experienced at the time of eating, many want food of this sort on account of the special relish they have for it. But in the end they come to grief; the protest of their physical system leads sooner or later to a crisis, and they feel all the inconveniences of a damaged digestion, if indeed they feel nothing worse.

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं च यत् ।
उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियम् ॥ १० ॥

10. Food which is not fresh, which has lost its taste, which is putrid and stale, which is of the leavings and unholy, is dear to the *tāmasa*.

The food dear to the *tāmasa* is not merely unwholesome, but unclean and foul as well. It tends to injure health and indicates a deadened taste. Those who like this kind of food—they may like and do anything, however foul. Note the statement that this kind of food is described as unholy, *amedhya*. It implies that it has not been offered to God. In other words, the man who eats it is an atheist or one who fails to realise his duty to God.

In passing, it may be observed that the epithets, '*yāta-yāmaṃ*' and '*paryushitaṃ*', indicate different degrees of staleness. The word, '*yāma*' stands for a period of time roughly corresponding to three hours. That which is three hours old is *yāta-yāmaṃ*. The term, '*paryushitaṃ*', indicates something which has remained overnight. The point to note is that all kinds of stale food are here condemned.

Śrī Kṛishṇa now passes on to a consideration of the different kinds of worship.

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्यज्ञो विधिदृष्टो य इज्यते ।
यष्टव्यमेवेति मनस्समाधाय स सात्त्विकः ॥ ११ ॥

11. That worship is *sāttvika*, which is found in the *Śāstras* and which is performed by those who have no desire for fruit, with a mind convinced that it is one's duty to worship.

'*Vidhi-dṛishṭa*' is that which is found in the *Śāstras*. The right kind of worship is found in the *Śāstras*. You may perform it either because you are consciously placing yourself under the regulations of the *Śāstras* or for some other reason. The righteous life may be lived either in conscious obedience to the commandments of the scripture or apart from it. In either case, your life is *sāttvika*. That is why, Śrī Kṛishṇa advisedly uses the expression, '*vidhi-dṛishṭa*', meaning nothing more than what is *found* in the *Śāstras.*

Then He proceeds to indicate the proper attitude on the part of the worshipper. He does not seem to attach so much importance to one's attitude towards the *Śāstras* as to one's attitude towards God and the performance of worship generally.

In the first place, worship must be conducted without any ulterior motives. You may remember the fourfold division of the devotees of the Lord we studied in the seventh chapter, the *ārta*, the *jijñāsu*, the *arthārthin* and the *jñānin*. There, it was stated, the wise men's worship is the best for the reason that it is disinterested. The excellence of one's worship depends entirely on one's freedom from selfish motives. It has sometimes been urged against this teaching, as you know well, that disinterested action is a chimerical concept which does not rest on truth. Opinions differ on this question. We always tend to judge others in the light of our own knowledge of ourselves. Anything that we can do, we believe that others also can do; and similarly what seems difficult or impossible to us appears also to be difficult or impossible in the case of others. Śrī Kṛishṇa tells us that disinterested action is possible, that a life of benevolence can be practised without ulterior motives of any kind. What we may call motiveless altruism is the key-note of His life. Such being the case, there is no reason for us to accept the view that disinterested action is impossible. The performance of duty is frequently and always must be disinterested. It must be done because of the feeling that it ought to be done. When worship is felt to be such a duty and performed without ulterior motives of any kind and with an outlook broadly similar to that of the *śāstras*, that worship is *sāttvika*.

अभिसंधाय तु फलं दम्भार्थमपि चैव यः ।
इज्यते भरतश्रेष्ठ तं यज्ञं विद्धि राजसम् ॥ १२ ॥

12. Know, O Arjuna, that worship to be *rājasa* which is performed with expectation of fruit and for the sake of ostentation.

The worship of the wise man which is marred by no selfish motives and which is performed as an end in itself, is *sāttvika*. But more frequently we see people worshipping seriously and sincerely, without however being free from the expectation of some reward. Worship appears to them the means for the attainment of something desirable. The removal of affliction, for instance, is one of the most common causes for fervent worship of God. Then, too, for the sake of wealth or knowledge, we may direct our devotion to God. In all these cases, our worship, though not

entirely unworthy, must still be considered to have fallen below the high *sāttvika* standard. Similar is the case of one who worships in order to win a reputation for piety. All these types of worship are *rājasa*.

विधिहीनमसृष्टान्नं मन्त्रहीनमदक्षिणम् ।
श्रद्धाविरहितं यज्ञं तामसं परिचक्षते ॥ १३ ॥

13. And they say that that worship is *tāmasa* which is against the ordinances of the scriptures, which is not accompanied by distribution of food, in connection with which no acts of charity are performed, in which no hymns of praise to the deity are chanted, and which is not actuated by faith.

The most important characteristic of the *tāmasa* type of worship is its complete lack of sincerity, its utter want of faith. In addition, it is against the commandments of the scriptures. If we are to understand aright the spirit of Śrī Kṛishṇa's teachings in the *Gītā*, we must take this to mean that the type of worship which is described here, runs clearly counter to the spirit of the *śāstras*, that it is condemned by all values dear to religion.

It may seem to many of you as curious that Śrī Kṛishṇa should consider the distribution of food as an essential part of true religious worship. The early history of most religions attaches great importance to the question of dining together. Commensality was for long the symbol of religious brotherhood, an indication that those who dined together were worshippers of the same God. Our early sacrifices were probably intended to own and proclaim formally kinship through communion The full moon and the new moon sacrifices, perhaps the oldest of their kind, were in the beginning animal sacrifices, and the sacrificer and the priests were expected to partake of the flesh of the victim. The seventh book of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* describes the division of the sacrificial animal into several pieces and their distribution among the officiating priests, the sacrificer, his wife and others connected with the performance of the sacrifice. The ritual of the *soma* sacrifice required that all persons connected with its

performance should drink together the juice of the *soma* plant, thereby indicating that they all belonged to one and the same religious brotherhood. The *madhuparka* rite, the offering of the "honeyed meal", required the use of flesh in ancient days and serves to illustrate very well the view that early sacrifices were acts of communion intended to establish kinship. The practice for long prevalent in our Vishṇu temples of offering food to the deity and then distributing it among all the worshippers is of the nature of a communion confirming the bond of universal brotherhood among them all as children of the same God.

Dr. Martin Haug, in the introduction to his edition of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, says that the ancient Parsis "knew of a particular ceremony of minor importance (called *stoma*), which consisted in consecrating a meal (meat is at this occasion indispensable) in honour of an angel or a deceased person to be enjoyed by the whole party assembled". Renan points out that primitive sacrifice among the Semites was only a preliminary preparation to a solemn repast, that to eat in common was with them a sacramental act, and that compacts and alliances made between persons or tribes or clans were all celebrated to the accompaniment of solemn sacrifices. Early Christian brotherhood was cemented by the sharing together of consecrated wine and bread.

Those of you who have read Scott's fine romance, *The Talisman*, may remember an incident towards the end, which brings home to us with remarkable vividness the force of this feeling among the Moslems. When the hostilities between Saladin and the Crusaders were practically at an end, the Moslem Prince invited the Christian potentates to a banquet. As the guests entered, one by one, the tent where the banquet was to be held, they were all offered iced sherbet. Suddenly, when the drink was handed over to one of the guests, the scimitar of Saladin flashed like a streak of lightning and the head of the Grand Master of the Templars rolled to the ground. To his shocked and bewildered guests, Saladin explained that the Grand Master was a traitor many times over, a cold-blooded murderer and worse. And the Moslem Prince added: "If I had permitted him to taste of my cup, as he was about to do, how could I, without incurring the

brand of inhospitality, have done him to death as he deserved? Had he murdered my father and afterwards partaken of my food and my bowl, not a hair of his head could have been injured by me."

The laws of hospitality, thus enunciated, owe their force to their association with early religion. It is, therefore, easy to see why so much stress is laid on the distribution of food to worshippers here. Eating together indicates formal recognition of fraternity in almost every religion, and the partaking together of the remnants of a sacrifice, *yajña-śishta*, is intended to show that those who share the offerings of food are all worshippers of the same deity and followers of the same religion and bound together by religious ties of brotherhood. Thus, if religion is to serve its social ends, every sacrifice must be associated with an offering of food to the deity worshipped, and this must be later distributed amongst all those who happen to be worshippers of the same deity.

Importance is also attached here to the distribution of alms, to gifts in charity, in association with or as a part of one's religious discipline. In the eighteenth chapter, as you will learn soon, Śrī Kṛishṇa analyses the elements of a religious life, on the basis of the teachings of the *Upanishads*, into *yajña*, *tapas* and *dāna*. Founders of religion have always befriended the poor, and helping the lot of the underdog has always been one of the chief social functions of religion. The semi-religious glamour that attaches in some measure to such movements as socialism is derived from their zeal in the service of the needy. The more religious a community is, the stronger is its tendency to bestow charity and the greater its readiness to live the life of *samatva*, sacrifice and service.

Thus we have been taught the various differences among the three types of *yajña*—*sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*. From the nature of the *yajña*, we may judge the nature of the performer of the *yajña*. Contrariwise, faith and worship also mould manners. And by holding the right kind of faith and performing the *sāttvika* type of worship, we may purify ourselves and pass one stage farther in the long pilgrimage to the City of God.

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Last time we were dealing with the question: how is the *yajña* performed by those who have faith in a life of worship and devotion to God, but who do not conduct their worship according to the widely accepted and authoritative regulations of the *śāstras*, to be examined and estimated? This life of *yajña*, we were taught, has three aspects. There is first the actual worship; there is then the discipline of self-restraint which is associated therewith; lastly, there are the acts of charity performed by the worshipper as a part of his religious life. These are the cardinal factors of religious life.

If a man claims to be religious and never does any act of worship, then his claim is false. Or again, if a man poses as pious and never subjects himself to any act of self-restraint, then also his life is hollow. It is hypocrisy again to manifest an interest in religion without performing acts of charity. When we try to analyse the religious life, we thus find it to consist of three elements: *yajña*, *tapas* and *dāna*. And this is quite in accordance with the views of the *Upanishads*. Now, the life of religion lived by any one must be judged by considering all these three aspects. One who lives a religious life agreeably to the faith that is in him and without accepting the authority of the *śāstras*, may or may not lead the right kind of life. Whether or not his *yajña*, *tapas* and *dāna* are of the right kind may be judged by seeing through external analysis whether they are *rājasa*, *tāmasa* or *sāttvika*. We have already learnt to classify *yajña* in this way. Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to deal similarly with *tapas*. And first He tells us what *tapas* is:

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञपूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शारीरं तप उच्यते ॥ १४ ॥

14. Honouring with due worship gods, Brahmins, religious preceptors and persons whose wisdom is great, purity, straighforwardness, celibacy and abstention from the infliction of injury—these are said to constitute bodily *tapas*.

The true meaning of '*tapas*' appears to be the infelt heat of effort in restraining the mind and the body so as to make them subserve the ends of the soul. Sanskrit psychologists tell us, as you are well aware, that if we are to attain self-mastery, it is necessary to exercise restraint over the three instruments of action pertaining to the soul, known as the *trikaraṇas*—the mind, the tongue and the body. Though they are instruments of the soul, they are capable of leading the soul on to wrong and improper paths. To check their tendency to operate so as to bewilder the soul in regard to the aim of life and thus to thwart the fulfilment of the ultimate destiny of the soul—this is to practise *tapas*. Action of the wrong kind is possible with any of the three instruments. One may hit a man unjustly. Again, you may think ill of a man and commit, so to speak, a mental sin. Between thought and action, as ordinarily understood, there lies speech. If you indulge in violence towards any person, the violence begins in thought, overflows in speech and culminates in action. Action, therefore, commences in thought, is reflected in speech and is consummated in the actual deed. Every action is related to *manas*, *vāk* and *kāya*. You have first of all to will in your mind any particular course of action, and then you either act or speak, or you may both speak and act. If self-restraint is to be exercised by you, it must be in relation to all these three things. *Tapas* is, therefore, here comprehensively classified under the three heads of *śārira-tapas*, *vāṅmaya-tapas* and *mānasa-tapas*, that is, the effort of self-discipline as directed to the control of the body, of the tongue and of the mind.

In this *śloka*, Śri Kṛishṇa explains to us what *śārira-tapas* is. Briefly, it is subjecting the body to an austere discipline and exercising control and restraint over physical impulses and tendencies. The worship of the gods, preceptors and wise men, particularly physical labour undertaken for the purpose of rendering service to them, is part of the *tapas* of the body. Devotionally inclined people may be observed doing various kinds of voluntary service in the temples—sweeping them free of dirt, watering the flower-gardens attached thereto, preparing garlands of flowers for adorning the consecrated images and so on. The idea underlying this kind of work is that it steadies the mind and strengthens it in its devotion. Next, there is *śaucha*, cleanliness

of the body. It may be asked whether it is an act of self-discipline to keep the body pure. To those who are accustomed to bathe daily, it is a natural habit to keep the body clean. But there are men who have not cultivated this habit and to whom it does not seem anything other than annoying and vexatious. Ruskin, I seem to recall, has written somewhere that if you want to understand how difficult it is for human nature to maintain cleanliness, you must get hold of people who never wash themselves and to whom nothing is so unpleasant and repulsive as a bath.

Then there is *ārjava*, straightforwardness or sincerity. It may be urged that sincerity is a mental characteristic and should not be regarded as part of corporal self-restraint. In the circumstances, we must understand it to mean something like such action as is in keeping with mental determination. By *ārjava*, we may well understand the proper governance of the body and training it to carry out the dictates of the will. Sincere activity is clearly meant here. If the activity of the body is not a true reflection of the mental resolve within, if there is no straightforwardness in the adjustment of physical activity to the condition of the mind within, then the body does what is not *ṛiju*. It indulges in the performance of insincere action. "Never do," Śrī Kṛishṇa must be understood to say in effect, "what the mind does not really impel you to do. Put your heart and soul in the work that you do, or do not do it at all." Then only there will be sincerity in conduct.

Brahmacharya, as you all know, is restraining sensual appetites. *Ahimsā* is non-violence in deed, refraining from injuring others.

Śārira-tapas, as described in this *śloka*, consists, therefore, in controlling the senses, in freedom from insincere conduct, in physical cleanliness, in abstention from injuring others, and in rendering physical service to gods, preceptors, sages and seers.

In the next stanza, Śrī Kṛishṇa describes the *tapas* of speech.

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥ १५ ॥

15. The statement which is unirritating and true and is at the same time agreeable and good, and also the recitation and the study of the scriptures—these are said to form verbal *tapas.*

Here it is laid down that the truth which it is desirable to speak, must be pleasant and productive of good. Manu has recommended that we must speak the truth always—but only the truth which is pleasant. We are expected to be polite and to speak in a pleasing manner. We are asked not to speak out unpleasant truths unnecessarily. This does not mean that under all circumstances politeness should over-ride higher principles. Circumstances may arise, when the highest dictates of duty will compel us to disregard this rule, but generally it is not necessary to be needlessly offensive. Even the penal code recognises this principle. The greater the truth, lawyers tell us, the greater the libel. In a society where all persons speak the truth, there would be no need for any such maxim of prudence. But human nature being what it is, dictates of prudence and conventions of good manners ought to receive some attention at our hands. Scandal-mongering may broadcast many truths, but it does not redound to the credit of those who indulge in it.

Let it be borne in mind that no compromise with principle is recommended here. We are only asked not to speak out unpleasant truths needlessly ; by this it is not implied that we are to speak pleasant falsehoods. Those who criticise injunctions like this as giving a religious sanction to the suppression of truth and the propagation of untruth, are guilty of a grave misjudgment. The suggestion here is that the natural tendency of men to hurt and injure those with whom they are not on good terms, should not gain any strength by masquerading as service in the cause of truth. Our first duty is towards truth ; but a secondary and by no means unimportant consideration is our duty towards social well-being, our responsibility for seeing that the machinery of society runs on oiled wheels without unnecessary friction.

The term, '*svādhyāya*', originally meant the process of repeating the *Veda* to oneself after learning it from a preceptor, with the object of memorising what has been learnt. It later

acquired an extended significance and is often used to indicate any kind of study. It will now be conceded that a very large amount of self-restraint is necessary to make your language always inoffensive, true, pleasant and good, and serve the cause of learning and study. If we try to reflect what proportion of the talk we generally indulge in is used for this kind of purpose and how much of it is a sheer waste of time, vain and aimless chattering or abuse or backbiting, if not positive indulgence in malicious falsehoods and swindling lies, we will learn to place due value on the austerity of speech which Śrī Kṛishṇa here points out to be a necessary part of any satisfactory scheme of self-discipline.

मनःप्रसादस्सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।
भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥ १६ ॥

16. Transparent kindliness of disposition, calm benignity, silence, self-restraint and purity of heart—such things as these are spoken of as mental *tapas*.

'*Prasāda*' means limpidity, clearness. We use the word to describe the water in a river or lake when it is perfectly clear and transparent. Applied to the mind, it indicates a state when the mind is calm and free from all disturbing influences. And this condition can be attained by us only when our relation to our environment is perfectly harmonious. *Mauna* is, of course, silence. We have had occasion to discuss the value of silence more than once in the course of our study of the *Gītā*. The old proverb, "Speech is silvern and silence is golden," contains a great deal of wisdom. Thomas Carlyle was never weary of preaching the virtues of silence, so much so indeed that a critic said that Carlyle taught the gospel of silence in thirty ponderous volumes. However, the point we have to note is that it is a difficult lesson to learn not to translate our thoughts and feelings, as they arise, into speech. Candour is certainly desirable, but malice and ill temper must not be allowed to foul the social atmosphere unchecked. *Atma-vinigraha* is the exercise of self-restraint in regard to one's self. *Bhāva-samśuddhi* is purity of heart. It may be possible for us to control the tongue and the body, while the mind remains untamed. Our *śārira-tapas* and *vāṅmaya-tapas* may seem flawless, externally observed; but they have little value, if the

mind remains impure. With purity of the heart, sweet speech and sincere action follow as a matter of course; without it, there can be only a shadow of virtue, a semblance of *tapas*.

Thus, *mānasa-tapas* is the most important part of the effort of self-discipline. It is the basis on which the life of speech and action is built. The *tapas* of the body and the tongue is only, so to speak, a reflection in speech and action of the austerity of the mind. It may be that the former will serve as a training-ground for the difficult task of taming the mind. Except in this light, however, it has no value. While the heart remains stained by selfishness and sensuality, the most perfect conduct and the most polite speech will indicate only success in dissimulation and hypocrisy.

Having explained to us the nature of this threefold *tapas*, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to explain when it is *sāttvika*, when *rājasa* and when *tāmasa*. A rigorous course of self-discipline may be undertaken from various motives, and it is according to these that the value of the *tapas* must be judged ultimately. For even purity of heart and perfection of conduct may be built on hidden layers of selfishness and ignorance, and benefit the soul as little as the training of the athlete in his gymnasium.

श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तपस्तत्त्रिविधं नरैः ।
अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्युक्तैः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते ॥ १७ ॥

17. This threefold *tapas*, performed with perfect faith by men who are devoted and who do not desire any profit therefrom, is said to be *sāttvika*.

Tapas, if it is to strengthen the soul, must be undertaken without selfish motives of any kind. Even the desire for salvation is to be eschewed. We must practise self-restraint with the faith that moral discipline is an end in itself. We must overcome temptation, not with the hope of storing up merit for a future life, but because surrender to it is an outrage on the best in us. It is only wise self-control, practised with faith and without ulterior motives of any kind, that can make one holy and enlightened.

fast on the *ekādaśī* day, which many pious people are in the habit of undertaking! The one is a foolish act of self-torture; the other is a discipline that purifies and strengthens the mind and the body. Or again, take the case of the young man who hopes to win favour in the eyes of his lady by starving himself. These are instances of self-control exercised with foolish obstinacy and for no reasonable purpose. Then, again, people may resort to black magic to cause injury to others. To propitiate the Powers of Darkness, whose help they seek, they may subject themselves to some kind of discipline. All these examples of *tapas* are *tāmasa* in character. They are the worst kinds of *tapas* and can do nothing good to their votaries.

Śrī Krishṇa now takes up for consideration the classification of *dāna*.

दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे ।
देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ॥ २० ॥

20. That gift is *sāttvika*, which is given in the faith that it is one's duty to give to one who has not helped (the donor), and which is given at a proper time and a proper place and to a worthy person.

Here, again, the idea of selflessness is brought to the fore. Gifts, made in expectation of return or in gratitude for services rendered, are no tests for one's generosity. If the gifts that we make as part of our religious discipline are to purify and strengthen us, then we must make them under the conviction that it is our duty to give. It is the bounden duty of those who have, to help those who have not. The world today is a sorry place to live in, because this duty is ignored, and poverty and plenty are allowed to jostle each other. Gifts also must be made with a proper sense of discrimination. They must be made with the intention of seeing that they are put to the best possible use. To ensure this, it is only commonsense to see that they are made to deserving persons and at the proper time and place.

यत्तु प्रत्युपकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य वा पुनः ।
दीयते च परिक्लिष्टं तद्राजसमुदाहृतम् ॥ २१ ॥

21. But, that which is given in return for help received or in expectation of a future gain, and unwillingly, is deemed *rājasa*.

On a lower footing stands the generosity which arises out of gratitude or stands in expectation of a future reward. To be grateful is good, but one who helps others in the belief that it is one's duty to do so transcends mere gratefulness and rises to the height of the ideal of universal equality and selfless altruism. Again, compulsory or grudging generosity is of little value as a discipline of the spirit. To make gifts because the beggar is importunate, or because it will add to your social prestige, is to be generous for a wrong reason.

अदेशकाले यद्दानमपात्रेभ्यश्च दीयते ।
असत्कृतमवज्ञातं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥ २२ ॥

22. That gift which is made to undeserving persons and at an improper time and place, without respect and contemptuously, is declared to be *tāmasa*.

Indiscriminate charity raises harmful consequences in its wake. The gift may be made by the donor with full faith in the moral efficacy of *dāna*, but socially it may have evil effects. You can all think out examples illustrating this. Living on charity for any length of time saps one's moral stamina and encourages social parasitism. Take the case of a man who comes to you with a tale of wife and children starving, but who spends most of the money that you give him in drink. Most probably, hard work and a sense of responsibility for the welfare of his family can make a new man out of him. Thus, in many ways, indiscriminate charity is undesirable, and it is the bounden duty of those who make munificent gifts to see that they are utilised in the right manner. A gift may thus be tarnished by the unworthiness of the recipient.

सत्कारमानपूजार्थं तपो दम्भेन चैव यत् ।
क्रियते तदिह प्रोक्तं राजसं चलमध्रुवम् ॥ १८ ॥

18. That *tapas* is here called *rājasa,* which is performed for the sake of (winning) reverence, praise and worship, and with ostentation, and which is unsteady and unenduring.

Fear of social opinion is one of the great incentives to the observance of conformity to the moral law. Self-restraint is often practised for the sake of fame. The speech may be true and unirritating, the body may be in rigid control, but the heart may not be fully cleansed of its impurities. If one hankers after honour, if one is pious in the hope that others will notice his piety, no amount of self-restraint will take him a step farther on the path to salvation. The way of virtue, of *samatva*, service, and sacrifice, must be sought as an end in itself. We must be good, because then alone will we be true to ourselves and to the God within us. Here, however, we are taught the characteristics of the *tapas* which is performed by those who are anxious to use their self-restraint as an instrument to win respect and reverence.

The three expressions, '*satkāra*', '*māna*' and '*pūja*', which I have translated as 'honour', 'praise' and 'worship', mean much the same thing, but a distinction has been made amongst them. It has been suggested that *satkāra* is *mānasika*; it refers to the good opinion entertained by others of one. *Māna* has been taken to mean honour broadcast in speech; in other words, praise. *Pūja* is honour and reverence shown in physical acts. For the sake of winning all these, the *rājasa tapas* is practised with a good deal of advertisement.

Practised with such motives, this self-discipline is obviously unsteady and unenduring When one feels that one may sin freely in obscurity, one throws the shackles of self-restraint aside and satisfies every kind of desire at every possible opportunity. Take the case of a man, pious and moral under the watchful eyes of his neighbours in his own village. Suppose he comes to this city of Madras where no one knows who lives next door. He can sin

here with impunity. There is no good opinion to forfeit, because no one knows him here and much less cares for what he does. It is for this reason that centres of pilgrimage are frequently dens of vice. Pilgrims flock thither from the four corners of the land. The floating population of these places is a collection of strangers. Anything and everything seems natural in these circumstances, and it is no wonder that holy cities offer innumerable opportunities for the wicked and the weak-minded. Thus, the discipline undertaken for the purpose of acquiring respectability is not firmly rooted. It is unsteady and uncertain. The motive behind it is the fear, not of sin, but of being found out. Therefore, it is only such moral discipline as is undertaken with faith and performed without ulterior motives, that can remain enduring.

मूढग्राहेणात्मनो यत्पीडया क्रियते तपः ।
परस्योत्सादनार्थं वा तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥ १९ ॥

19. That *tapas* is called *tāmasa,* which is performed out of foolish obstinacy, with pain to oneself or for the purpose of destroying others.

Tapas involves a certain amount of trouble and possibly pain to oneself. There is a world of difference, however, between the pain that strengthens and the pain that debilitates. The athlete who is trained in the gymnasium, has to go through a course of exercises every day. But the difficulties to which he subjects himself are different from those that confront a labourer who is working beyond the limits of endurance or is attempting a task beyond his strength. It all depends on the way in which the discipline is gone through and the purpose for which it is directed. The truth of this applies in a greater measure, if you will, to the question of *tapas*. Children sometimes become morose and obstinate. They sulk and decline to eat. It is not that they are ill and do not feel hungry. They feel the appetite, but having got into a fit of temper, they stubbornly refuse to take nourishment. Here is a case of self-control, exercised with tenacious strength. But of what avail is it? Its purpose is nothing less than to harm oneself. How different is this *tapas*, if we may call it so, from the

It is, however, equally important to note that the attitude of the donor also plays a part in determining the quality of the gift. In practising charity and relieving the needy, the right attitude ought to be one of sincere sympathy; one may even go further and say that we must feel grateful to those who receive help at our hands for giving us an opportunity for service and sacrifice which alone give grace and beauty and meaning to life. That is why the ancient laws of hospitality prevalent in this land laid so much stress on *atithi-satkāra*, honouring the guest, and the magical virtues of *dāna*. That being the case, if we treat those who seek help at our hands with discourtesy and dishonour, we are stultifying the purpose of our existence. To give gifts grudgingly is bad enough; but to give with scorn and contempt is far worse. And so even as indiscriminate charity is the worst type of charity, the *dāna* given scornfully and contemptuously is *tāmasa*. The gift may be stained both by the worthlessness of the recipient and the arrogance of the donor.

Śrī Kṛishṇa has so far given us pointers to see what kind of religious life is worthy and what is not. He has analysed qualitatively the various possible types of the cardinal elements of religious life—*yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*. Now, He proceeds to take into consideration the important question of Arjuna, which was responsible for all this discussion—the question, namely, how the worship of those who are actuated by faith, but feel no confidence in the *śāstras*, is to be judged. In answering this question, Śrī Kṛishṇa lays down what we may call the essence of the religious attitude, the *sine qua non* for the religious life. And that is stated in the following *śloka*:

ॐ तत्सदिति निर्देशो ब्रह्मणस्त्रिविधस्स्मृतः ।
ब्राह्मणास्तेन वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च विहिताः पुरा ॥ २३ ॥

23. "Yes, It exists,"—this is the threefold characterisation of the *Brahman*. And by this were the Brahmins, the *Vedas* and all acts of worship formerly brought into existence.

'*Om tat sat*' is an old sacred formula known to the religion of the *Vedas*. Literally interpreted, those three words mean:

"Yes, that exists." This is here declared to be the threefold characterisation of the Supreme Being who is the foundation and support of all that is in the universe. It is implied that each of these words can teach us what the *Brahman* is. We will do well, therefore, to bestow some thought on the import conveyed by them and try to see how the formula mentioned above is a threefold characterisation of the Supreme *Brahman*.

In all early religions, the endeavour of thought has been to find out what may be called the supernatural foundation of the universe, to look beyond mere appearances and see the God who is hidden behind the veil of Nature. One of the earliest forms in which the Supreme Being was realised, is found in the formula, '*Om tat sat*'. Now, if there is one religion which has striven as earnestly as our own to rise from known Nature to the unknown God who is above and beyond Nature, it is the religion of the ancient Jews. And it is not without significance that they too formulated one of their earliest realisations of God in almost the very words of the statement made here. On the top of Mount Sinai, it is related, Moses saw God within a bush that was burning, but not consumed. Moses wanted to know who that God was and what His name was. Jehovah then declared: "I am that I am." (*Exodus*, III.) You can see the parallelism between this declaration of Jehovah and the formula, '*Om tat sat*'. One is a statement, as from God Himself, on what He is; the other is the realisation of the earnest seeker after truth. "I am that I am" is in the first person; '*Om tat sat*' is in the third person. And the truth that these teach is the end of all philosophy, the object of all human thought.

And what after all is this central truth of philosophy? In regard to the important question as to whether there is any God, there has been much struggle and striving. Differences of opinion there have been, but all the thinkers who have arrived at the theistic view cannot tell us anything more on this problem than what is given in Jehovah's great declaration, "I am that I am", or the *Vedic* formula, '*Om tat sat*'. All that they can say is that God exists—exists, that is to say, in a sense different from all other things that exist. His existence has a unique significance. He exists entirely by Himself, independent of anything which is

external to Himself. The universe, on the other hand, depends for its existence on the power of God, and has thus, so to speak, only a secondary existence.

In the phrase, '*Oṁ tat sat*', the particle, '*Oṁ*', as we have seen already, may be denoted by the English word, "Yes"; thus, it emphasises the fact of the existence of God. Religious experience has demonstrated this all the world over, and everywhere, too, it has been revealed that God exists in a manner entirely unique. He alone exists, *par excellence*. It is, therefore, easy to see how the phrase, '*Oṁ tat sat*', is the threefold characterisation of the *Brahman*. It is not a meaningless religious formula, but one in which the religious experience of mankind from the earliest ages to the times that are now passing, is summed up. It is a phrase in which the eternal struggle of man to realise God finds its classic expression. Not otherwise than through this statement can we state all that we know and can know of God.

Out of this characterisation of the *Brahman*, it is further taught in this *śloka*, has evolved all that we associate with religion —the seer and the prophet, the scripture or the revelation, the rites and ceremonies through which worship is directed. This may be easily understood in the light of the explanation that I ventured to place before you just now. If you take up a negative attitude in regard to the question of God, if you subscribe to the Everlasting Nay, there is need for no prophet, nor revelation, nor ritual. The seer claims to see beyond the visible universe into the mystery of what sustains and supports it. But you may think that there is no truth beyond what is seen. Laplace, the great astronomer, is said to have searched the heavens with his telescope and to have regretfully exclaimed at the end: "I can see no God." Neither telescopes nor microscopes can take us near to God. The spiritual discipline perfected by the prophets and the sages, affords us the only way of seeing God. It is the task of heroism to attain the experience of God-realisation through the practice of *yoga*, and only those who have had this experience can teach us with authority that He is. The Everlasting Yea alone can lead us to a belief in the *āptatva*, the integrity, of priests and prophets and in the truth of revealed scriptures.

It is thus that the attitude enshrined in the expression, '*Oṁ tat sat*', is responsible for religious life as it is lived in society, for the Brahmins who teach religion, for the *Vedas* which command conduct, and for the rites and ceremonies, the worship and the adoration, that form the way to God. Once we understand that God exists and that the entire universe rests in Him and depends on Him, it follows that we must so live our life as to be in harmonious relations with that vast unseen Power. This is the essence of the teaching given in the *Vedas* by the saints and seers of old. And it is evident now that if '*Oṁ tat sat*' is an appropriate characterisation of the *Brahman*, then our life must be lived in such a manner as to accord full recognition to the teachers of religion, the revealed scriptures and the acts of worship. In other words, we may well say that out of the characterisation of the *Brahman* as '*Oṁ tat sat*', out of the affirmative attitude towards God and faith in His existence, sprang up the priests and the prophets, the holy books and the life of religion generally.

Let us now see how the leading commentators explain this *śloka*. According to Śaṅkarāchārya, it teaches the means of expiating the sins that may arise in connection with the performance of religious acts like sacrifices. The utterance of the three words, '*Oṁ*', '*tat*' and '*sat*', frees religious rites from the errors or defects that may have arisen in conneotion with their performance, and they have this virtue because they denote the Supreme *Brahman*. Hence they are extolled in the second half of the *śloka* thus: "By means of these (names) the Brāhmaṇas, *Vedas* and sacrifices were created formerly." It has been suggested that the creation was by the four-faced Brahmā, the creator, through the help of this threefold designation of the *Brahman*. Nīlakaṇṭha points out that the word, '*Oṁ*', denotes the *Brahman* in such scriptural passages as '*Oṁ*' *iti Brahma*' (*Taittirīya Upanishad*, I. 8. 1.) and that the words, '*tat*' and '*sat*', serve a similar purpose in such scriptural passage as '*Tat tvam asi*' and '*Sat eva saumya*' (*Chhāndogya Upanishad* VI. 8. 7 & VI. 2. 1). Rāmānujāchārya takes the word, '*Brahman*', to mean *Vedic* religious acts and says that the three words, '*Oṁ*', '*tat*' and '*sat*', occurring in this *śloka* are logically associated with those acts and characterise them. The word,

'*Oṁ*', is connected with religious acts in general; and through its being pronounced at the commencement of every religious rite, it becomes part and parcel of that rite itself, and in this manner it forms a necessary element in all religious rites. The words, '*tat*' and '*sat*', denote that the performance of those religious rites which are begun with the utterance of '*Oṁ*', is, under the circumstances, worthy and deserving of all respect. Madhvāchārya says that these three words, '*Oṁ*', '*Tat*' and '*Sat*', denote the *Brahman* for the following reasons: '*Oṁ*' means that He is the support of the whole universe; '*tat*' signifies that He is perceived by all knowers possessed of meritorious qualities; and the meaning of '*sat*' is that He is free from all that is evil and abundantly full of auspicious qualities.

Let us stop here to-day.

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Last week we concluded Śrī Kṛishṇa's classification of *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas* into the three categories of *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*. In particular, we tried to understand Śrī Kṛishṇa's description of the threefold nature of *tapas*, mental, moral and physical. In all these classifications, the object is evidently to indicate to us how we may judge a man's *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*, not so much from the standpoint of the injunctions given in the *śāstras*, as from their intrinsic nature, taking into consideration all the accompanying circumstances in connection with their performance. A criterion is thus set forth to estimate the religious life of a man who is actuated by sincere faith, but is unable to accept the authority of the *śāstras*. In what we have to do today, this criterion is indirectly established.

You may remember that in the course of the discussion of *śloka* 23, with which we concluded our last class, I tried to point out to you how the *nirdeśa* of the *Brahman* as '*Oṁ tat sat*' is the best that can be given and how it is one of the earliest realisations of God that truth-seekers have arrived at in different countries. In the designation of the *Brahman* as "Yes, that exists", we have, as it were, the key to the evolution of religious life in general, to the recognition of the authority of the priests and the prophets and of the holy scriptures, and to the origin and growth of various

religious rites and forms of worship. The value of any kind of religious life may be judged by the test of the fundamental religious attitude as laid down in the declaration, '*Oṁ tat sat*'. And in order to enable us to do this, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to make a detailed study of the words composing that formula.

तस्मादोमित्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः ।
प्रवर्तन्ते विधानोक्ताः सततं ब्रह्मवादिनाम् ॥ २४ ॥

24. Therefore, all acts of worship, charity and penance, enjoined by the scriptures, are begun by those who study the *Brahman* with the utterance of (the syllable) '*Oṁ*'.

A *Brahmavādin* is one who discusses questions relating to the *Brahman*, that is to say, an enquiring philosopher. Now, it is stated here that all earnest philosophers begin their acts of religion, whether they are acts of worship, charity or austerity, with the utterance of the word, '*Oṁ*'. This syllable, as I have been informed, signifies what is denoted in English by "Yes". When understood in this sense, it will become evident why the utterance of this word is considered essential at the commencement of every religious rite. The intention is that you must utter this affirmation, "Yes", to fortify your faith and strengthen your sincerity in regard to the religious activity that you propose to begin. The utterance of "Yes" is a summary statement of faith, a broad affirmation of the theistic position in philosophy and ethics. If your answer to the question of the existence of God is an emphatic 'No', there is no inducement for you to believe in the morality of service, *samatva* and sacrifice. Whether or not you answer this question with a Yes or a No determines the lines on which your life is shaped and lived. The need for ethics arises only from the affirmative attitude, and the establishment of a scale of moral values depends intimately upon it.

In this manner it can be shown that a great deal depends on the utterance of "Yes" before any religious activity is undertaken. For otherwise, religion will lack faith and sincerity and be only a lie and a delusion. And it has to be noted here that with the passage of time, the syllable, '*Oṁ*', which was made to determine the

fundamental religious attitude, has acquired a symbolic significance. Much is meant and more is impiled by the *praṇava*, as it is called, in the history of Sanskrit philosophy. '*Oṁ*', it is stated, represents great truths of philosophy and religion in many ways, and some of these we will do well to study here. From the standpoint of phonetic analysis, the sound, '*Oṁ*', is split up into *a*, *u*, and *m*. As they say in Sanskrit, the *oṅkāra* is made up of *akāra*, *ukāra* and *makāra*. These three different sounds get blended into the single phonetic element, '*Oṁ*'. And when we pronounce it, we are not conscious of its having arisen from the combination of three distinct sound-elements; it appears to be a single entity by itself. Now, this phonetic analysis of '*Oṁ*' is given a figurative significance. It is declared that the key to the study of all knowledge and truth lies in this fusion of three sounds to form the syllable, '*Oṁ*'. Man, universe and God, here are the ultimate entities that every philosopher reaches at the end of his investigation. Now these are in a sense different from one another; and yet they blend together to form a harmonious whole. There are differences of opinion amongst the leading Indian thinkers as to the exact manner in which this unity in diversity is to be understood. Yet none has any quarrel with the broad concept outlined above. In the manner in which *a*, *u*, and *m*, though distinct from one another, get fused into the syllable, '*Oṁ*', even so matter, soul and God unite together in harmony to form the unity that we call the universe. Here is one of the ways in which the rich suggestive meaning of the *oṅkāra* has been interpreted.

It is also stated that the *praṇava* is representative of the *Vedic* gods. Now, these gods have been classified according to the various regions which they are believed to inhabit. Some gods are supposed to live in this earth, others in heaven, and yet others in the mid-region of *antariksha*. *Oṅkāra*, it is declared, represents all these gods, *a* representing one set of gods, *u* standing for another group and *m* representing the rest. Some of you may say that, by this representation, the *praṇava* is made to embody a polytheistic idea. This, however, is not really the case. There is a famous discussion in our *Upanishads*, which makes this absolutely clear. Yājñavalkya, the seer, is asked by Vidaghda Śākalya: How many are the gods? He answers: "Three and

thirty crores." This view is known to every one in this country, man, woman or child. Not satisfied with this answer, Śākalya repeats the question. This time the sage answers: "Three crores." The same question, repeated several times, elicits ultimately from Yājñavalkya the declaration that there is only one God. It is clear from this dialogue that Yājñavalkya wants us to regard the gods of the *Vedic* pantheon as being synthesized into the one God of the *Vedānta*. If the *praṇava* is understood in this light, its importance becomes obvious, for it will then represent the essence of all revelation.

Yet another way in which the importance of the *oṅkāra* is made out involves consideration of the relation between language and meaning. It is said that the relation between the invisible God and the visible universe is like the relation between the unheard meaning and the heard speech. Let us pause for a moment to see what really happens when we hear some one telling us something. There is the sensation of sound, and there is also the meaning which we attach to the sounds that we hear. This meaning is not of the nature of a sensation, but is closely related to the sounds that impinge on our ears. It is something which cannot be perceived like a sensation, but has to be understood by the mind. What you understand in the mind is not heard by you. The mind has the power of getting to know this something, which is different from the perceivable sensations that are carried to the mind through the channels of the senses. Confining ourselves for the present to the sensation of sound, we note everywhere a distinct relation between sound and sense. Now, it is suggested that the relation between the visible universe and the invisible God is analogous to the relation between the perceived sound and the understood sense. After all, God cannot be perceived by us. The relation between God and the universe is a metaphysical relation. So long as God cannot be directly perceived by us, the truth about Him has to be learnt by us through analogies of some kind or other. And the analogy here suggested is for many reasons among the best that can be conceived.

Since the relation between sound and sense gives us an insight into the nature of the relation between God and the universe, language gains a value of its own. And that value is enhanced by

the fact that the scriptures which reveal the truth about God, are enshrined in language of some kind or other. Language as language, then, becomes sacred; and the *oṅkāra*, it is urged, acquires a sacred significance, because it is representative of all language. You may ask: How can that be? The answer is given by a phonetic analysis of language generally. Language, of course, is made up of sounds of many kinds. These sounds are produced by the larynx, and are, so to speak, articulated by the mouth and the throat. What I mean is that the sounds of language are distinct from one another on account of the part that the mouth and the throat play in their evolution. And unless sounds are distinct and articulate in this manner, they are incapable of conveying any meaning. Even music, delightful as it may be, fails in this repect.

Sanskrit phoneticians from very early times have classified the phonetic units of the Sanskrit language from the positions in the mechanism of speech at which they are severally articulated. From the throat onwards to the lips we have several positions at which various classes of sounds are produced. There are gutturals formed at the throat, dentals originating from the teeth and so on. As we have seen, the syllable, '*Oṁ*', has been analysed into three phonetic constituents—*a*, *u* and *m*. *A*, we may say, is typically representative of all articulate sounds whose articulation is at the throat. *M* similarly represents sounds which arise at the lips. And *u* stands for all sounds that are produced anywhere between the throat and the lips. In this way the *oṅkāra* may be regarded as typifying all possible sounds, for all linguistic sounds, whether spoken by the Esquimo or the Toda or any cultured and civilised person, are articulated with the help of the vocal organs mentioned above. Language in general is thus symbolised by the syllable, '*Oṁ*', and as language itself is sacred for the various reasons discussed above, the *oṅkāra* is also sacred as the suggestive symbol of all language.

Yet another reason for the importance and great religious value of the *oṅkāra* is its wide use as an aid to *yogic* meditation leading to self-realisation and God-realisation. *Yogins* tell us that it is helpful in fixing the mind upon the object of meditation and saving it from distraction.

Here are some of the reasons which are given by our teachers for the halo of symbolic significance surrounding the *oṅkāra.* If we accept any of these, if the *praṇava* reminds us of any of these great truths, then certainly it is easy to see why its utterance is enjoined before the formal commencement of any religious act. Even, however, if we take it to mean no more than "Yes", it is not very difficult to see why it is essential that we should utter it when beginning any religious action. Religion has no meaning, unless it affirms the existence of what we loosely call God. The religious attitude implies a belief in values other than those envisaged by selfishness, a passion for service, a perspective that takes the past and the future of history at a glance. There must be faith in altruism, service, morality. We cannot be religious, unless we have faith of some kind, unless we believe in the Everlasting Yea. If our religious life is to be sincere, our faith has to be continually fortified and clarified. And nothing is more helpful for this purpose than the affirmation of the fundamentals of religious faith, as summarised in the *oṅkāra.*

Śaṅkarāchārya has nothing to say in particular in regard to this *śloka.* Rāmānujāchārya says that this *śloka* teaches the mode in which the word, '*Oṁ*', is associated with religious rites. After repeating the word, '*Oṁ*', sacrifices, gifts and *tapas*—which are all prescribed in the *śāstras*—have to be begun by all those who study the *Vedas.* The word, '*Oṁ*', as already stated, has to be uttered at the commencement of every religious act, even when we resolve to do it.

तदित्यनभिसंधाय फलं यज्ञतपःक्रियाः ।
दानक्रियाश्च विविधाः क्रियन्ते मोक्षकाङ्क्षिभिः ॥ २५ ॥

25. Acts of worship, austerity and charity are performed by those, who aspire after salvation, without desire for fruit and accompanied by the utterance of the word, '*Tat*'.

That duty unselfishly done is capable of leading us on to the salvation of *moksha,* we have been taught over and over again. You will remember the various methods that Śrī Kṛishṇa suggested for overcoming our ingrained tendency towards

selfishness. There is first of all faith in duty as duty, as something that the better part of one's nature demands ought to be done. Or else, you may try to see the part that *prakṛiti* plays in our daily life. Most of the thoughts that we think and the actions that we do are impelled and executed by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. Life as it is generally lived is largely motivated by physical needs and stimuli. If we recognise this fact, we will be induced to overcome the possessive instinct which makes us feel that we are the agents of our deeds and the owners of their fruits. This is at best only a negative attitude. A more philosophic attitude demands a faith in God as the centre of all power and hence as the agent of all acts. If we attribute to God the agency of all our deeds, then selfishness becomes irrelevant. Those who study with earnestness Chapters 7 to 12 of the *Gītā* are left in no doubt as regards Śrī Kṛishṇa's views on this question. It is not a mere act of faith to say that God is the doer of all deeds which we believe that we perform. According to Śrī Kṛishṇa, it is a demonstrated conclusion.

Hence it is easy to see that it seems to be meant in the *Gītā* that it is a progressive advancement in the line of ethical improvement to pass from the discipline of *karma* to that of *jñāna*, and from this again to the discipline of *bhakti* and *prapatti*, because one who uses this last discipline is guided by the widest and most comprehensive vision of truth. To do duty for its own sake is good. To recognise the agency of *prakṛiti* in all our actions is commendable. Either of these may lead us ultimately to the salvation of *moksha*. But it is best of all to realise that God is the agent of all our actions. The realisation of the truth of God and His relation to the universe is the best among the many means by which we may learn the lesson of selflessness.

If we understand this, there will be no difficulty in perceiving why we are asked to utter the word, '*tat*', when performing any religious action. The *oṅkāra* uttered at the beginning aids us in fortifying our faith and encouraging our sincerity. '*Tat*', uttered immediately after, draws our mind away from our petty little selves to the Lord who is the source of all power and the agent of all deeds. It makes us lose at once the sense of agency and thus frees us from *ahaṅkāra* and *mamakāra*.

This *śloka*, according to Rāmānujāchārya, teaches the manner in which the word, '*tat*', is associated with religious duties. The acts of sacrifice, of giving gifts and of performing *tapas* have to be performed without attachment to the fruits thereof by all those who are desirous of attaining salvation. These acts so done are the means of attaining salvation and are, therefore, denoted by the word, '*tat*', which denotes the Supreme *Brahman* Himself.

सद्भावे साधुभावे च सदित्येतत्प्रयुज्यते ।
प्रशस्ते कर्मणि तथा सच्छब्दः पार्थ युज्यते ॥ २६ ॥

26. This (word) '*sat*', is used in the sense of existence and goodness; and likewise, O Arjuna, the term, '*sat*', is used for any action deserving of praise.

It is a noteworthy fact that in Sanskrit the term, '*sat*', stands for both reality and goodness, a fact which, we may fancy, helps us to realise the basic faith of all religions that what really and fundamentally exists is good. When we speak of God as *sat*, we must not merely understand that He exists, but also that He is good. There is no meaning in religion, unless there is a God who is harmoniously related to the universe. We cannot be truly religious, if we believe with poets like Thomas Hardy that the world is ruled by a blind and heedless Destiny, a Vast Imbecility which is indifferent to moral values. The *Gītā* has given us a comprehensive vision of God as both immanent and transcendent.

God, of course, cannot be studied as we study the universe. But as the results of scientific investigation have established the existence of what are called laws of Nature, it is reasonable to think that the God who is immanent in this cosmos must be related harmoniously to it. There is order and system in the world around us Even such cataclysms of Nature as cyclones and earthquakes obey laws of their own. The adventure of science is based on the faith that nothing takes place in Nature, which is not in accordance with observable and uniform laws. It is thus that science is able to visualise the past and imagine the future. When we try to rise from Nature, so orderly and systematic, to Nature's God, how can we think of Him as maintaining a relation of discord and disharmony with the universe? A God who is the stay

and support of an orderly cosmos, cannot be given over to whims and fancies. He must adjust His relations with the universe, we feel, so as to be in harmony with the laws He has Himself made and of which we are vouchsafed stray glimpses. And from all this it is easy to say that the God who exists is good.

It is further stated in this *śloka* that when a man performs a praiseworthy action, the term, '*sat*', is used. Religious acts such as *yajña, dāna* and *tapas* are worthy of praise, not because they meticulously conform to the details of orthodox ritualism, but because they are in themselves praiseworthy. The right and proper kind of religion makes our life one continuous act of devotion to God. Any kind of improper life may well be deemed to be a continuous act of devotion to the lower, animal self within us. It must be either the one or the other. There can be no middle course. Now you can understand how the utterance of the formula, '*Oṁ tat sat*', is helpful to us in living the higher life. It reminds us from moment to moment of the fundamental truths of religion and of the way to salvation. It trains us in godliness and selflessness. That is why those who have faith in religion use this phrase so often in connection with the various actions that they may perform from time to time. It is at once a symbol and a reminder of the whole-hearted dedication that true religion implies.

According to Rāmānujāchārya, the word, '*sat*', here means whatever is, as, for instance, a chair, a gem, etc; it is also used to denote what is good in ordinary life; it denotes again an auspicious ceremony. Madhvāchārya takes the word, '*sat*', to mean a thing which one has not and which one gets or acquires as, for instance, sons and daughters which one has not in the beginning and acquires later on in life. According to Śaṅkarāchārya, the word, '*sādhubhāva*', means the righteous conduct of one who was formerly unrighteous.

यज्ञे तपसि दाने च स्थितिः सदिति चोच्यते ।
कर्म चैव तदर्थीयं सदित्येवाभिधीयते ॥ २७ ॥

27. Steadfastness in worship, penance and charity is spoken of as *sat*; so also any action for His sake is called *sat*.

Here there is a further development of the meaning of '*sat*'. '*Sthiti*' is steadfastness, constancy, even perhaps devotion. When we realise that God alone is truly existent and fundamentally good, we must try to mould our life in accordance with this realisation. We must try to make our life also both *sat* and *sādhu*. It is sometimes said in regard to the many evils and pains that humanity suffers from, that they are only relative and not at all permanent. Those evils, they say, will cancel one another in course of time and ultimately leave the victory to the good and the true. In other words, it is suggested that there is no permanent scope for evil in this universe. History over a wide range of years shows the assertion of harmony against discord, of goodness against evil, of political uprightness against intrigue and selfishness. Those who have studied the growth of society and state from their dim biological beginnings among gregarious animals can testify to the great triumph of the forces of concord over those of discord in the history of evolution. It is not without reason that a great European philosopher saw in history the gradual unfoldment of the Absolute. Discords and disharmonies, pain and evil undoubtedly exist; but they are not fundamental. They come and pass like the clouds that hide the sun from us. But in the end, even as the sun shines brightly, the triumph of the good is established. This, indeed, is the meaning of the often misunderstood epigram: whatever is is right.

Now, if our religious life is to be true and good, it must be in harmonious relations with the Lord, who is truly existent and good. We derive our power and energy from Him, we owe our very existence to Him. His relation to us is one of concord and harmony. So we cannot establish any other kind of relation with Him, unless we are wantonly evil and vicious. Our life is *sat*, when it is truly existent, and *sādhu*, when it is concordant with the reality of things. And this can be only when we lead a life devoted to religion, to worship, charity and penance. Devotion to these deserves to be spoken of as *sat* and *sādhu*, so long as our religious life is directed in the proper manner, that is, so long as it is appropriately characterised by the phrase, '*Oṁ tat sat*'.

Every action done for the sake of God is also *sat*. If our life is lived in the right and proper manner, every action that we do

must be for His sake. Only so shall our life be concordant with the reality of things. I do not believe that it is possible for any one to attain to a more satisfactory or higher position of dignity than that in which one can feel that one is a fellow-worker with God. To be related harmoniously to God, who is the stay and support of this universe and from whom all power and energy is derived, is to work in the same direction that He does. You may all remember the simile that I once before used of the universe being somewhat like a mighty engine under the control and guidance of God. We are all called upon to relate ourselves to the machine. We are free to choose a relation of harmony or one of discord. The working of the machine is not affected by the choice that we may make. But our destiny is dependent on our choice. Relating ourselves harmoniously to the machine, we are saved. Opposing the machine, we are doomed. When we co-operate with the working of the machine, the power of God is behind us and gradually takes us on to the great goal of salvation. We then become fellow-workers with God, not in the sense that we attain to anything like equality with Him in the measure and quality of the work that we perform, but in the sense that we work in the same direction that He does. Our work is meagre, insignificant. But it is in the right direction. It is done for His sake. Any work done in this manner is undoubtedly *sat*.

According to Rāmānujāchārya, this *śloka* means that one has to be steadfast in performing religious works like sacrifices, and this steadfastness is also called *sat* and all those acts which are related to them also go by the name of *sat*. Those religious acts, if done with the object of obtaining and enjoying their fruits, lead to worldly prosperity and to *samsāra* and rebirth. Nevertheless, they are called *sat*, as they are all enjoined by the *śāstras* and are done in accordance therewith, although they are done with attachment to the fruits thereof. The word, '*sat*', denotes the *Brahman* Himself, since it denotes the sacrifice etc., done in regard to Him. Another view is that there is anxiety on the part of the worshipper that religious acts should become dedicated to God, or should constitute His worship. To attain this object, acts like waving lights and so forth, which are accessory to such rites as sacrifices and which lead to such dedication and are called '*sat*', have to be performed by those who perform the sacrifices themselves.

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् ।
असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह ॥ २८ ॥

28. Whatever oblation is offered or gift is made, whatever penance is practised, whatever action is performed, without faith, it is called *asat,* O Arjuna. It is of no use here or hereafter.

A life of religion lived without faith produces none of the results that one may expect from it either here or hereafter. Religion without sincerity is shadow without substance, the husk without the grain. One may pretend to be religious with the hope of winning the good opinion of those around him. But sooner or later the truth will be found out, and the hypocrite will receive scorn instead of praise. It is hardly necessary to say that such a life cannot free one from the bondage of *karma*, but must, on the other hand, forge fresh fetters for the soul. It is of no account here or hereafter.

With this *śloka* we reach the end of the seventeenth chapter. You may now ask whether Arjuna's question has been answered. How are we to judge of the life of a man who feels no confidence in the *śāstras*, but leads a life of faith and religion? The answer to this question is indicated in many places in the seventeenth chapter and is emphasised in the very last *śloka* which we did just now. The first point to note is that the life of such a man will be earnest and sincere. As he is sincere and earnest, all his *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas* must be *sāttvika*. So such a life cannot but be *sat*. This applies to the case of the man who, while not having seen a satisfactory injunction in the *śāstras*, still lives the life of faith. But how are we to judge of one who, knowing the truth of *śāstras*, wants to discredit them and tries to lead a life based on his own convictions? He professes to know more than the sages and seers of the past. He is a paragon of wisdom in his own conceit. Of such a one, can we say that he is free from selfishness and self-assertion? It is possible to judge charitably of one who forsakes his religion and becomes converted to another, actuated by honest conviction; he is merely seeking for a satisfactory guide. But the man who disdains the authority of all *śāstras* and accepts

no guide to conduct save his own conscience, displays intellectual and moral vanity of a pronounced kind. In the genuine seeker after truth, there must be humility and receptiveness. The *śāstras* should not be approached with the preconceived idea that the best wisdom in the world is to be found in one's own self. It is only when the right approach is made in the right spirit and yet no satisfaction is gained, that there can be sincere faith and religion, resting on personal conviction and yet worthy of being characterised as *sāttvika*.

The salient features of the seventeenth chapter are summarised in the following *śloka* by Yāmunāchārya :

अशास्त्रं आसुरं कृत्स्नं शास्त्रीयं गुणतःपृथक् ।
लक्षणं शास्त्रसिद्धस्य त्रिधा सप्तदशोदितम् ॥

The sense of this, as you may see, is that all that is done against the commands of the *śāstras* is demoniacal, while what is ordained in the *śāstras* is capable of being classified from the standpoint of the quality it shows (*i.e.*, as *sāttvika*, *rājasa* or *tāmasa*). And what is established in the *śāstras* has the distinctive attribute of being denoted by the three words, '*Oṁ tat sat*'. There is first of all the distinction between what is ordained by the *śāstras* and what is not. Whatever is not commanded by the scriptures is here described as demoniacal. Now, that which is in accordance with the *śāstras*, it is further declared, is capable of being characterised by the formula, '*Oṁ tat sat*'.

In the light of the explanation that I ventured to suggest sometime ago, you will have understood that this expression describes the basic foundations of the religious attitude. Any one who adopts this attitude cannot go far wrong. His life, even though it may not be consciously guided by the *śāstras*, will still be praiseworthy. He will obey the spirit, even though he may not observe the letter of the *śāstras*. Looking at the matter from a slightly different standpoint, the utterance of this expression corrects and rectifies all defective religious rites. For what is most needed in religion is faith and sincerity, and '*Oṁ tat sat*' is nothing other than an affirmation of faith. Even among those who obey the injunctions of the *śāstras*, distinctions have to be

made. There is saving grace only in that religious life which is coloured by no ulterior motives and which is lived for its own sake. That alone is *sāttvika*, whether it is deliberately guided by the authority of the *śāstras* or adopted otherwise with faith and sincerity and without self-conceit of any kind. And in accordance with the motives prompting the religious life, we may further divide those who adopt it into the *rājasa* and *tāmasa* categories.

I may note here that a verse which summarises the teachings of this chapter from the standpoint of the *Advaitins*, says: "Those who have no knowledge of the *śāstras*, but who worship God with faith according to the promptings of their innate impressions existing at birth, attain results suited to such impressions, according as they are *sāttvika*, *rājasa* or *tāmasa*. These three names—'*Oṁ tat sat*'—when uttered, are capable of removing the *rājasa* and *tāmasa* aspects of those acts and of converting them into the worship of God so as to lead to salvation."

CHAPTER XVIII

lxxiv

You may remember that the seventeenth chapter, which we finished last time, came in as a kind of digression, though, perhaps, a necessary digression. The sixteenth chapter ended with a statement on the authority of the *śāstras* in the guidance of conduct. Without the *śāstras*, we then learnt, it is impossible for the large majority of men to lead their lives aright. It is only human to be led by interest and to succumb to temptation. The course of discipline that morality expects of us—the discipline of self-restraint and sacrifice—will be seldom practised, if men are allowed to live according to their natural instincts and tendencies. And so Śrī Kṛishṇa declares: "In determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, the *śāstra* is your guide". (XVI. 24.)

Out of this arose the digression which the seventeenth chapter dealt with, the question, namely, of the manner in which we are to judge of the conduct of persons who are endowed with faith, but who do not conduct themselves in accordance with the commandments of the *śāstras*. There are men who regulate their

lives, not in conscious obedience to the commandments of the *śāstras*, but in accordance with what they think in the light of their faith to be true, right and just. As you are well aware, the entire drift of the seventeenth chapter has been to point out that the lives of such men must be deemed *sāttvika*, whether the driving force behind their lives is belief in the authoritativeness of the *śāstras* or some kind of faith which is in consonance with the essential and fundamental concepts of religion. No one is to be penalised for technical flaws in religious life. The life of religion must be judged, not from a ritualistic or legalistic standpoint, but by its capacity to place us in harmonious relations with the plan and purpose behind the process of the universe. Emphasis is to be laid more on the spirit than on the letter of the *śāstras*.

To take up the thread of the argument, we will have to go back to the end of the sixteenth chapter. The question with which the eighteenth chapter begins follows naturally from the declaration of Śrī Kṛishṇa at the end of the sixteenth chapter on the authority of the *śāstras*. The question which is now taken up for consideration is that of *tyāga* and *sannyāsa*. Both the terms, as you are aware, mean renunciation. In the scriptures of our faith, *tyāga* and *sannyāsa* are recommended. Almost every important *Upanishad* declares emphatically that the way to salvation lies through *tyāga* and *sannyāsa*. That being the case, Arjuna now wants to know how it is that when he is prepared to adopt this life of *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*, which is commanded in the *śāstras*, Śrī Kṛishṇa insists on his fighting a war with his cousins and winning a kingdom for himself and his brothers. Arjuna seems to feel that the teaching of Śrī Kṛishṇa appears to run counter to the spirit of the *śāstras*, whose authority He has Himself upheld so eloquently.

Observe the spirit in which the question is put. Up to the end of the sixteenth chapter, Śrī Kṛishṇa was teaching the fundamental basis of ethics. The imperative obligation to perform one's duty at whatever cost and without attachment to the results was explained. And in determining what one's duty is and what it is not, it was further laid down, the guidance of the *śāstras* must be sought. Arjuna accepts all this. He fully understands the position taken up by Śrī Kṛishṇa. But so strong is his

aversion to war that even at this stage he tries to find a loophole of escape. He, therefore, draws the attention of Śrī Kṛishṇa to the injunctions in the scriptures, enjoining *tyāga* and *sannyāsa*, and questions how the commandments of the *śāstras* and the teaching of Śrī Kṛishṇa are to be reconciled. Śṛī Kṛishṇa gives here the answer that He has given many times before. Revealing the secret of true renunciation, He explains how Arjuna will be failing in the discharge of his duties, if he flies away from the battlefield under the erroneous impression that he is obeying thereby the scriptural injunction to renounce. Please notice how the subject of renunciation arises here naturally out of the context.

अर्जुन उवाच—

सन्न्यासस्य महाबाहो तत्त्वमिच्छामि वेदितुम् ।
त्यागस्य च हृषीकेश पृथक्केशिनिषूदन ॥ १ ॥

ARJUNA SAID:

1. I want to know the truth about *sannyāsa*, O Krishṇa, and also about *tyāga* severally.

'*Tyāga*' and '*sannyāsa*' are terms generally used in a synonymous sense. They stand for renunciation. Here, however, a distinction between the two is made by Śrī Kṛishṇa, which helps to reveal clearly the central feature of His teaching on the subject of renunciation. Before stating His settled conclusion on the question, Śrī Kṛishṇa takes note of various contemporary views on the subject and criticises them.

श्रीभगवानुवाच—

काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं सन्न्यासं कवयो विदुः ।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं प्राहुस्त्यागं विचक्षणाः ॥ २ ॥

ŚRĪ KRISHṆA SAID:

2. The sages understand *sannyāsa* to be the abandonment of all actions that are prompted by desire. The wise say that the giving up of the fruits of all actions is *tyāga*.

You will have observed that, in this and preceding stanzas, I have left the terms, '*sannyāsa*' and '*tyāga*', untranslated. In view of the special, one may almost say, technical significance given to the words here, it is better that this should be so. It will not be easy to find English equivalents for the two words, conveying the delicate distinction that Śrī Kṛishṇa draws. You may also observe that I have rendered the term, '*kavi*', in the verse as a sage. Usually in classical Sanskrit, the term stands for a poet, but in early *Vedic* literature it always denotes a wise sage or seer.

The work which men perform in life may be classified under different heads. There is *niyata-karma*, work which must be done. And there is *kāmya-karma*, work prompted by desire, work which is undertaken to satisfy one's aspirations. It is here taught that neither *sannyāsa* nor *tyāga* should be understood to mean the giving up of *niyata-karma*, the duty which it has fallen to one's lot to discharge. Arjuna has been repeatedly told that it is not right for him to give up what happens to be his duty in life or *niyata-karma*. For a warrior to fight in a war for the vindication of justice is inescapable duty. Renunciation rightly understood does not require the abandonment of all kinds of work. Passive inaction is impossible in the very nature of things, nor does it indicate the ideal of renunciation. So long as we live, we must be doing some kind of work or other. But we can certainly choose the sort of work that we must do to occupy our time. The more one indulges in actions prompted by desires, the less time one has for the performance of one's duties. Besides, by trying to satisfy our desires, we sign away our own freedom and become the slaves of passion. *Saṅkalpa-prabhava-kāma*, the desire arising out of our own volition, and the actions undertaken to satisfy it, stand in the way of true renunciation. Desire prompts action, and action carried out for the satisfaction of desire gives rise to a fresh desire in turn, or gives added strength and vigour to the old desire. It is, therefore, essential that actions prompted by desire should be given up. This, according to Śrī Kṛishṇa, is the meaning of the *Vedāntic* scriptures, when they enjoin *sannyāsa*. They bid us conquer the *saṅkalpa-prabhava-kāma* by refraining from such work as is purely *kāmya*.

Whatever the work that you may perform, whether it is undertaken by you out of a desire to fulfil some object in view or merely as duty, if you give up the fruits of your work, then you practise *tyāga*. Since both *tyāga* and *sannyāsa* are enjoined in the *śāstras*, it is easy to see what the teaching of the *śāstras* on the question of renunciation is. First, we must concentrate on the performance of duty. Desires should, as far as possible, be restrained, and we must give up all actions which are prompted by the urge to satisfy our desires. Then, we must do our duties, without the slightest expectation of any reward here or hereafter and without the least taint of attachment to the fruits of our work. Practising in this manner both *tyāga* and *sannyāsa*, we will be able to overcome the bondage of *karma*.

It may be observed in passing that it is possible to understand the distinction between *niyata-karma* and *kāmya-karma* in a different manner. We may restrict the significance of the word, '*karma*', and take it to mean only religious rites. In our scriptures, it is laid down that certain religious rites must be performed by all; they are obligatory. The performance of *sandhyā-vandana* may be taken as an instance to the point. There are also rites prescribed for the attainment of particular objects. The performance of *jyotishṭoma* with the object of attaining *Svarga*, or of the sacrifice of *putra-kameshṭi* for the sake of getting a son, illustrates this. The term, '*niyata-karma*', may well stand for the class of religious rites which are obligatory, while by '*kāmya-karma*' we may understand those rituals that are undertaken for the attainment of particular objects and the satisfaction of our desires. It follows from this that the practice of *sannyāsa* will mean the giving up of all kinds of *kāmya-karma* and that of *tyāga* the relinquishing of the fruits of all *niyata-karmas*.

This view, I think, unduly narrows down the scope of the teaching of Śrī Kṛishṇa on the question of renunciation. And the general trend of the *Gītā*, I am certain, lends support to the wider significance which we considered at first. The context clearly shows that Arjuna is not concerned at present with the question of making a choice among different kinds of rituals. The problem before him is whether or not he is justified in retiring from the battle-field under the belief that by so doing he is

practising the *tyāga* and the *sannyāsa* recommended in our *śāstras*. The view that Śrī Kṛishṇa takes of this question is patent. Indeed, it seems as though the context required us to make Śrī Kṛishṇa's teaching on this question applicable to the whole of life; and so we cannot but understand '*karma*' here to mean action in general and not religious ritual in particular.

The distinction that Śrī Kṛishṇa makes here between *sannyāsa* and *tyāga* is not kept up throughout the chapter. The terms are used in the general sense of renunciation hereafter, as no need is felt for keeping up the distinction.

त्याज्यं दोषवदित्येके कर्म प्राहुर्मनीषिणः ।
यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यमिति चापरे ॥ ३ ॥

3. Some sages declare that (all) work should be given up as being full of evil, and others that works of charity, penance and worship should not be given up.

It is held by some wise sages that the performance of action tends to bind the soul, and that any one who wants to adopt the life of *nivṛitti* recommended in the *Upanishads* should give up all *karma*. Here too the term, '*karma*', may be understood with a restricted significance, in which case there will only be a reference to the view that one who is desirous of salvation must give up all religious rites whatsoever. Śrī Kṛishṇa then proceeds to draw our attention to the views of those who think that certain kinds of work should never be given up. Worship, penance and charity—these cardinal elements of religious life are obligatory on all and under all circumstances. There can be no religion without them. It is this latter view which Śrī Kṛishṇa is seeking to uphold. But the large charity of His heart induces Him to refer respectfully those who differ from Him. They too are *manīshiṇaḥ*, wise men.

निश्चयं शृणु मे तत्र त्यागे भरतसत्तम ।
त्यागो हि पुरुषव्याघ्र त्रिविधस्संप्रकीर्तितः ॥ ४ ॥

यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।
यज्ञो दान तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥ ५ ॥

4. In regard to that *tyāga*, O Arjuna, listen to My settled conviction. *Tyāga*, O Arjuna, is described to be threefold.

5. Works of charity, penance and worship should not be given up, but must needs be performed. Worship, charity and penance purify the wise.

Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to state His settled conclusion on the question of renunciation. We are left in no doubt about His views. He classifies *tyāga* also as *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*, but before taking up that discussion He makes his position on the whole perfectly clear. Worship, charity and discipline are the three cardinal factors of religious life as we have been taught. Śrī Kṛishṇa now declares that they should never be given up, but must needs be performed. For they sanctify and purify even the wise. If they are performed in the manner in which they ought to be performed, that is, without attachment to the results and from a sense of duty, they lead to deliverance from bondage. Nothing strengthens us so much as exercise. If one wants to acquire the power of being selfless, one cannot get it by merely doing nothing. In such a case, the *tyāga* would be *rasavarja*. There may be freedom from overt acts, but the relish will be lingering in the heart. In such a case, there can be no real renunciation, which implies absolute selflessness in the heart. Wise men provide themselves with ample scope for the exercise of selflessness by performing these kinds of work, and become ultimately masters of themselves.

We must understand the terms, '*yajña*', '*dāna*' and '*tapas*', with a wide significance. They refer to all kinds of worship, charity and penance, and not merely to those that are formally undertaken as religious rites. They tend to purify the wise. But those who are not wise, even these cannot purify. For these may be *rājasa* or *tāmasa*, in which case they will only strengthen the bondage of *karma*. The wise will adopt only the *sāttvika* variety of worship, charity and penance, and these, it is needless to say again, will purify them. The three kinds of *tyāga* mentioned in this verse may refer, as suggested here, to the classification made hereafter of *tyāga* into *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and

tāmasa varieties, or it may refer to the giving up of agency, the giving up of fruit and the giving up of ownership.

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च ।
कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम् ॥ ६ ॥

6. It is My decided and excellent opinion that even those actions, O Arjuna, should be done, giving up attachment and abandoning the fruits thereof.

Śrī Kṛishṇa has already told us that there is difference of opinion in regard to the true meaning of renunciation. Some wise men, we learnt, hold that '*sannyāsa*' means '*sarva-karma-tyāga*', giving up all work. Others, however, think differently. It is urged, that even in the life of *sannyāsa*, there ought to be room for the work of *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*. But it is essential that these must be performed without attachment to either the work itself or to its fruits. There must be freedom from the feelings of *ahaṅkāra* and *mamakāra*, the sense of agency and ownership, when these necessary actions are performed. It is noteworthy that Śrī Kṛishṇa puts forward His views on this question with special emphasis. This is His settled conviction. It is in His opinion the best view on the question, most suitable for all to follow.

नियतस्य तु सन्न्यासः कर्मणो नोपपद्यते ।
मोहात्तस्य परित्यागस्तामसः परिकीर्तितः ॥ ७ ॥

7. The renunciation of work which ought to be done, is not proper. Its abandonment through delusion is declared to be *tāmasa*.

We were informed before that *tyāga* might be divided into three kinds. These are now dealt with, one by one. *Tāmasa-tyāga* is first taken into consideration. The giving up of *kāmya-karma*, as we have been taught, is allowable and, indeed, desirable. But the *niyata-karma* should never be given up. If any one gives up the eternally obligatory duties, then he is guilty of *tāmasa-tyaga*. Consider now the case of Arjuna. He is anxious to renounce his duties as a warrior and to flee away from the battle-field. Fighting in a war waged for the vindication of justice

is his *niyata-karma*. It is the inescapable duty of a warrior to fight in a war, whenever the cause of justice requires his services. When such a demand is being made on the skill and heroism of a soldier, if he feels a desire to adopt the life of *nivṛitti*, what does it mean? It can only mean something like this: that the soldier is anxious to run away from his post of duty, that he finds the performance of his duty either unpleasant or injurious to his self-interest. It may be that the soldier gives up his duty under the delusion that he is accomplishing an act of magnificent renunciation. Man is always an egoist in the presence of his conscience. In whatever way we may disguise our weaknesses and whatever plausible untruths we may invent to lay a flattering unction to our souls, the divine law of *karma* will judge us unerringly. As they say in Sanskrit, "Akaraṇe pratvavāyaḥ". Failure to perform our duty burdens us with sin. We cannot escape from it by deluding ourselves with wrong notions about our duty, or by clothing our weaknesses and selfishness in the garb of saintliness. If you understand the distinction between *kāmya-karma* and *niyata-karma* and that between *sarva-karma-tyāga* and *sarva-karma-phala-tyāga*, you will never confound pure renunciation with *niyata-karma-tyāga*. If you delude yourself with the idea that giving up your primary and inevitable duties is true renunciation, then your *tyāga* is *tāmasa*.

Other reasons for giving up one's duty are considered hereafter.

दुःखमित्येव यत्कर्म कायक्लेशभयात्त्यजेत् ।
स कृत्वा राजसं त्यागं नैव त्यागफलं लभेत् ॥ ८ ॥

8. He who renounces action as being troublesome, out of fear of physical strain, performs *rājasa-tyāga* (and) does not at all attain the fruit of renunciation.

Suppose one feels that a certain duty which falls to one's lot is too difficult to be accomplished, that it involves considerable physical exertion. Suppose further that these feelings give rise to a failure in the discharge of the duty. That would be an example of *rājasa-tyāga*. Take the case of Arjuna, for instance. Imagine that he is anxious to give up his duty, because he is

acutely conscious of the difficulties that face him, that he dislikes the trouble and the exertion, the labour and the pain that fighting against the famed warriors on the other side would necessarily involve. In such a case, Arjuna's renunciation would be *rājasa*. To renounce action because of the pain associated with the performance thereof, or out of dislike of the physical strain involved, is not renunciation for the right reason and in the right spirit. That being the case, from such renunciation no one can attain the fruit of real renunciation. It is not necessary for me to dilate on what the fruit of true renunciation is. The attainment of *moksha*, as you are well aware, is the end and aim of renunciation.

The immediate effect of renunciation is to free us from the bondage of *karma*. The *Upanishads* enjoin renunciation with the object of purifying our hearts of desires and ridding us of the bondage of *karma*. That is the intention underlying the commands to practise *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*. But when renunciation is not practised in the right spirit, it can only strengthen the bondage of *karma*. Consider *rājasa-tyāga*. When you give up your duty out of dislike of the pain associated with its performance, or out of fear of the physical strain involved, you cannot grandiloquently claim that you are practising renunciation. You are merely being selfish. You are only avoiding pain and looking to your own comforts. The motive behind *rājasa-tyāga* is a preference for the welfare of the body over the needs of the soul. Therefore, the very *tyāga* which is needed to rid you of attachment, drags you deeper into its net. How can this *tyāga*, if we may call it so, give us the result of pure renunciation, the calm of spirit, the freedom from attachment, that we all require before we become eligible for final emancipation?

कार्यमित्येव यत्कर्म नियतं क्रियतेऽर्जुन ।
सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्यागस्सात्त्विको मतः ॥ ९ ॥

9. That *tyāga* is deemed *sāttvika*, (which is practised) when obligatory action is performed, giving up attachment and the fruit also, with the feeling that it ought to be performed.

True renunciation is not so much renunciation of action, as the renunciation of the fruits of action. So long as we live, we cannot but be doing something or other. It is open to us to choose some kinds of action in preference to others, and it is always possible to acquire a serene detachment of spirit which will enable us to perform our duties without attachment. The best kind of *tyāga* does not permit us to give up our duties. It insists on our doing them, but without attachment. Śrī Kṛishṇa's recommendation to Arjuna may be deemed to be as follows: "You are a warrior by birth and breeding. It has fallen to your lot to fight now, and fight you must. When you fight, do not think of the consequences. Do not seek to decide the question whether or not you ought to fight by trying to see whether the end of the war will give you pain or pleasure. Do your duty, feeling that it has to be done by you and that you cannot give it up. Do not feel that in doing your duty you are achieving anything. Do not think that you have any title to the fruits of your work. Give up all attachment to the work that you do and to the fruits of your achievement, and allow yourself to be swayed only by a sense of duty."

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It is known to you all that our *Śāstras* give us two sets of apparently contradictory injunctions in regard to the manner in which we ought to conduct our lives. One set of these enjoins on us particular kinds of work in accordance with the particular conditions amidst which we find ourselves in society. We are asked to achieve salvation through works. This is the teaching relating to what is known as the *pravṛitti-mārga*. There are again injunctions which bid us renounce and betake ourselves to the life of *sannyāsa*. This is the path of *nivṛitti*. Between the life of aggressive action and achievement and the life of retirement, renunciation and asceticism, we are all apt to see some kind of contradiction. The need for some sort of reconciliation is felt by all faithful believers.

We may get over the difficulty by holding that the contradictory injunctions relate to different types of people. Those who are fit for it may adopt the *nivṛitti-mārga*, and the rest may

follow the path of *pravṛitti*. One and the same person is not asked to adopt both work and renunciation at the same time. If this view is adopted, immediately a difficulty arises, the difficulty felt by Arjuna here. Men often misjudge their fitness for following either of these paths. Arjuna, who is a soldier born and bred and who is by birth and training fit for the active life of *pravṛitti*, wants to adopt the life of mendicant asceticism. If he is allowed to make a wrong choice now, he may be ruining himself and bringing a harvest of trouble to the society amidst which he lives. For we are all parts of a big organism, and any malfunctioning in one place is likely to affect the welfare of the larger whole with which we are intimately related. You feel ill when any part of the body refuses to function properly. So, too, society. From the standpoint of social economy, it is unwise to allow unfit and unqualified persons to carry on the various necessary functions that have to be discharged. If efficient work is to be done, and if the machinery of social organisation is to run smoothly, there must be division of labour according to fitness and qualification. Apart from this question, there is the fair objection that when two injunctions, equally obligatory, are given, we are not entitled to hold that one applies to some and the other to others. We cannot say that some sections of the Penal Code alone apply to us. We are not entitled to choose which sections of the criminal law of the land we shall obey and which it is convenient for us to ignore. All sections of the Code are applicable to all persons who place themselves under the authority of the sovereign who has promulgated the Code. It is foolish to imagine that we may break such sections of the Penal Code as are distasteful to us, in the belief that only those sections which we like are applicable to us. All are equal in the eye of the law, and all sections of the Code are equally binding on people in similar circumstances.

Let us try to look at the authoritative scripture which commands our conduct, in this light. Here are two different sets of commandments, one referring to action and achievement, the other enjoining the life of renunciation and retirement. For any of us to say that only one set is applicable to us is much like saying that only one-half of the Penal Code has to be obeyed by us. We must, therefore, take it that the authority behind the

command to follow the *pravṛitti-mārga* is as good as the authority behind the command to follow the *nivṛitti-mārga*. It is thus essential to find out another way in which these apparently contradictory injunctions can be reconciled in the life of every one who is anxious to obey the behests of the *śāstras*. How this can be done is the great question which Śrī Kṛishṇa here undertakes to solve; the answer that He gives has been placed many times before you in different contexts.

The argument behind Arjuna's question at the beginning of this chapter may be summed up thus: "I understand the force of your argument that I must get up and do my duty because action is so very necessary. But where then is the scope for the operation of those injunctions of the *śāstras* which enjoin *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*? What is the meaning of renunciation, if it does not mean retiring from the battle-field and living a life of mendicant asceticism?" Now Śrī Kṛishṇa does not reply that *sannyāsa* and *tyāga* are meant for a particular set of people. He defines '*sannyāsa*' and '*tyāga*' as '*kāmya-karma-tyāga*' and '*sarva-karma-phala-tyāga*' respectively, and points out that the two sets of injunctions in the *śāstras* are not contradictory or irreconcilable.

Work can be divided into two classes: optional and obligatory. The latter must be done. It cannot be abandoned both in the interests of the individual concerned and in those of the society of which he is a member. So, by '*sannyāsa*', we have to understand the giving up, not of all kinds of work, but only of those which are optional. We are all swayed by desires of various kinds, and most, if not all, of the work that we do in life is impelled by these. Some of them are *sahaja-kāmas*, the instinctive urges to satisfy some of the primal needs of life. There are also *saṅkalpa-prabhava-kāmas*, desires wilfully indulged in. The desire for food arises out of physiological necessity and is common to all mankind; but the desire for some special kind of food, or for a luxury of some kind, such as a costly scent or a gaudy dress, arises out of our own will. The former is a *sahaja-kāma*; the latter is a *saṅkalpa-prabhava-kāma*. Now we are often asked to be simple in the life that we lead. What does this mean? It implies a check upon the tendency of our will to multiply wants. We are asked to lead a life in which all our

natural wants are naturally satisfied. Let us not create any wants that are not required by the necessities of life. Curbing these *saṅkalpa-prabhava-kāmas* leads to the giving up of *kāmya-karmas*. The injunction to practise *sannyāsa* relates to these desires and the work undertaken to satisfy them.

Consider now work which is obligatory and essential. It is not possible, nor desirable to give up work of this kind. The *niyata-karma* should never be abandoned. The question then arises: Does not the performance of this kind of work lead to *karma-bandha?* Every thought that we think, every word that we speak, every act that we do, leave their own impress behind. Each of them creates a *samskāra*, and when life in a particular embodiment ceases, the accumulated *samskāra* gives rise to another life and influences it as *janmāntara-vāsanā*. It may, therefore, be argued that even the performance of the *niyata-karma* will help towards the bondage of the soul in *samsāra*, and that, for the good of the soul, all action should be given up. Śrī Kṛishṇa, however, undertakes to show that the performance of the *niyata-karma* need not clash with the achievement of the *summum bonum* for the soul. If the work which is obligatory is performed without the feeling that one is the agent and that one is entitled to the fruits of one's labour, then no *vāsanā* can be created either in the form of *puṇya* or of *pāpa*; and the soul will not be building up a force that will chain it to the toils of *samsāra*.

To sum up Śrī Kṛishṇa's teaching on this important question The work that we do in life may be classified as optional and obligatory. Work which is optional, which is undertaken for the satisfaction of the *saṅkalpa-prabhava-kāmas*, must be abandoned. But whatever work is obligatory must be performed in a spirit of dispassionate detachment, without expectation of reward and under a sense of duty. In performing the obligatory work enjoined in the *śāstras*, you are living a life of action and achievement and following the *pravṛitti-mārga*. By giving up *kāmya-karma* or work which is optional, you are obeying the scriptural commandments in regard to the practice of *sannyāsa*. In giving up attachment to the results of the work that you do, you are observing the injunction relating to *tyāga*. Action and

renunciation, *pravṛitti* and *nivṛitti*, are all reconciled thus in the life of one who follows the teachings of Śrī Kṛishṇa.

After stating His settled view on this vexed question, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to enlighten Arjuna on the characteristics of true renunciation. He points out first that renunciation for the wrong reason, out of laziness or fear of difficulties, is not renunciation at all. Then He passes on to a consideration of *sāttvika-tyāga*, and you will remember that it is there that we stopped last week. The best kind of *tyāga*, we then saw, knows no fear and no reluctance; it does not arise out of fear or fatigue. In the performance of *niyata-karmas*, only this kind of *tyāga* is to be observed. In the stanza with which we have to begin our work today, further characteristics of one who practises *sāttvika-tyāga* are given.

न द्वेष्ट्यकुशलं कर्म कुशले नानुषज्जते ।
त्यागी सत्त्वसमाविष्टो मेधावी छिन्नसंशयः ॥ १० ॥

10. One who practises *tyāga*, being wise, imbued with goodness and free from doubts, does not hate any action which is unpleasant, nor feels attachment to any action which is pleasant.

Let us consider once again the definition of *sāttvika-tyāga*. It is practised, when the duties that fall to one's lot to discharge are carried out because their performance is realised to be incumbent on one and without the least taint of *ahankāra* or *mamakāra*. Such a *tyāgin* must be free from *i-ness* and *mine-ness*. *Sanga-tyāga* must, of course, precede *phala-tyāga*. Without the former, there may be a show of *phala-tyāga*, but its substance will be wanting. Therefore, the renunciation of *sanga* and *phala* by one who performs his duties in life out of a sense of duty and without being actuated by any feeling of "I" or "mine"—such renunciation is *sāttvika*.

Consider one who is practising such *tyāga*. It will be evident at once that such a person must be possessed of wisdom. The wise, of course, are tranquil. Their wisdom sets their doubts at rest. Every one is faced with the question: How am I to

live? The manner in which any one solves this question depends on the wisdom and discernment with which one is endowed. Wisdom, indeed, may show us a clear way out of all doubts and difficulties. The possession of wisdom is itself a sure indication of the possession of goodness, of a dominant *sāttvika* disposition. It also follows as a matter of course that in trying to discharge bounden duties, a wise *tyāgin* will not allow considerations of personal convenience or preferences to have any weight. He will not hate work which is *akuśala*, nor become specially attached to work which is *kuśala*.

Let us try to understand the significance of these two terms, '*kuśala*' and '*akuśala*'. We have often been told that we must perform whatever happens to be our duty in life. We must not try to judge our duty as high or low, good or bad, desirable or undesirable. It has fallen to Arjuna's lot to fight in a war for the vindication of justice; and fight he must, though the war is to be waged against his own kinsmen and friends, teachers and preceptors. The episode of Dharma-vyādha in the *Mahābhārata* illustrates this point beautifully. Dharma-vyādha was a butcher by trade; yet he was recognised as one of the greatest teachers in his days, as a seer and a prophet. This was because, as I sought to explain to you once before, he discharged the duties that fell to him in the spirit in which they ought to be discharged. He did not hate the life which he had to lead; nor did he feel any special attachment towards it. He realised that, owing to various considerations such as heritage, environment, opportunities in life, and so on, he had to get a living by selling meat, and he pursued his avocation in the spirit of the *sāttvika*. To many of us his life may seem to be full of cruelty and sin. But we have to realise that, if the butcher carries on his trade under the belief that it is his appointed function in life and that he is doing his duty in pursuing his vocation, we cannot convict him of any sin.

For the maintenance of social organisation, it is essential that all its varied and manifold functions must be performed by all sorts and conditions of men, endowed with various kinds of aptitudes and qualifications. All of us cannot occupy the same position in life, nor carry on the same kind of work. But all of us have to discharge duties in life. It is necessary that these duties

have to be discharged in the right spirit. Carrying out the various functions in life is not an end in itself. We must not delude ourselves into the belief that some kinds of work in life are desirable and that others are not so, that these desirable kinds of work must be performed with special zest and that work which is undesirable may be carried out grudgingly. Every kind of work is good, worthy and honourable, so long as it becomes obligatory. We must discharge our appointed duty in life, the *niyata-karma* which has fallen to our lot, whether it is agreeable or disagreeable, held to be honourable or dishonourable, high or low. We are bound to perform it without attachment to the results and without considering whether it is *kuśala* or *akuśala*. The work of the scavenger in the streets is as worthy and honourable in relation to him as that of the sovereign who exercises authority from the throne, similarly considered. The duty of the one is no whit inferior to that of the other. It is because Dharma-vyādha taught this truth by the life that he lived that the *Vyādha-gītā* has become almost as famous as the *Bhagavadgītā* itself. We must learn not to cast longing glances at the duties of others, duties which we are incapable of discharging. We must feel that there is no ignominy attaching to the performance of one's duty in life, whatever it may be. "Act well your part, there all honour lies."

न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्माण्यशेषतः ।
यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते ॥ ११ ॥

11. Indeed, it is not possible for an embodied being to give up actions completely. But he who has renounced the fruits of action is said to have renounced.

This is a fact which Śrī Kṛishṇa has been frequently bringing to our notice. You may remember the statement made in III. 8, that even the maintenance of the body would be impossible without work. *Sannyāsā* and *tyāga* should not be interpreted to mean the renunciation of all work. A life of absolute inaction and passivity is impossible in the very nature of things; and we must not expect any *śāstra* worthy of our reverence and obedience to give such advice as it would not be possible to carry out in practice. If any one interprets any injunction of the *śāstra* to mean something which is impossible of accomplishment, then we

are faced with the alternatives of either discarding the authority of the *śāstra*, or what is more desirable, rejecting such an interpretation in favour of a more reasonable one. Now, there are some *śāstraic* injunctions enjoining on us the performance of *karma*, and there are also other such injunctions recommending renunciation. If *tyāga* and *sannyāsa* are taken to mean the giving up of work, then they are incompatible with the life of *pravṛitti*. Śrī Kṛishṇa, however, has laid down that they must not be understood in this manner, for this reason, if for nothing else, that it is impossible to live without work. In the life of all embodied beings, there is a physiological as well as a psychological necessity for work. We cannot help doing some kind of work or other. Nevertheless, the injunction to practise *sannyāsa* and *tyāga* stands, and we have to reconcile *tyāga* and *pravṛitti* by understanding the former to mean *sarva-karma-phala tyāga*.

Śaṅkarāchārya, however, thinks that the term, '*deha-bhṛit*', refers only to one who confounds the body with the soul; for the wise seer who is not a *deha-bhṛit* in this sense, absolute renunciation of work is possible. The unenlightened who indulge in the performance of action, can be called *tyāgins* only by courtesy; and it is in this honorific sense that '*karma-phala-tyāga*' is taken to mean '*tyāga*'.

अनिष्टमिष्टं मिश्रं च त्रिविधं कर्मणः फलम् ।
भवत्यत्यागिनां प्रेत्य न तु सन्न्यासिनां क्वचित् ॥ १२ ॥

12. In regard to those who have not renounced (the fruits of their work), the result, after death, of their action is threefold—undesirable, desirable, and mixed; but never is there (any fruit for the actions) of those who have renounced.

Those who have not renounced the fruits of their actions naturally reap the fruits of their actions. It may be that the results of their *karmas* are pleasant and desirable, or are unpleasant and undesirable, or are partly pleasant and partly unpleasant. The *phala* which is *ishṭa*, will bring us in the course of our next incarnation opportunities for advancement and happiness. The *phala* which is *anishṭa*, will ensure for us misery and suffering in

our next birth. The *phala* which is *miśra* or mixed, will be partly pleasant and partly unpleasant. If we please, we may look on the desirable fruit as the attainment of *Svarga*, the undesirable fruit as a fall into *naraka* or into the wombs of animals, and the fruit which is mixed as a continuance more or less in the human embodiment. The point for us to note is that these several kinds of fruits accrue only to the actions of those who have not renounced the fruits of their actions; and whether pleasant or unpleasant, they constitute fetters for the soul and impede its progress to final emancipation. In the case of those, however, who perform their work in life under a sense of duty and without attachment to the results of their work, there is no bondage of *karma* created. What creates bondage for the soul is not work, but the disposition with which work is performed. The performance of *niyata-karma* by the *tyāgin* under a sense of duty cannot give rise to *karma-bandha*, or help the soul to continue in the bondage of *samsāra*.

Please observe that the term, '*sannyāsin*', is used in this *śloka* in its ordinary sense of one who has renounced; it is used in contrast with the word, '*atyāgin*', one who has not renounced. The special and technical significance of the term, '*sannyāsa*', as explained in stanza 2, is not meant here. As I told you before, though Śrī Kṛishṇa finds it useful to make a distinction between *sannyāsa* and *tyāga* in order to explain clearly the position that He has taken up in regard to the real meaning of renunciation, He does not feel any necessity to maintain that distinction throughout, on account of their kinship in meaning.

पञ्चैतानि महाबाहो कारणानि निबोध मे ।
साङ्ख्ये कृतान्ते प्रोक्तानि सिद्धये सर्वकर्मणाम् ॥ १३ ॥

13. Learn from Me, O Arjuna, the five causes that are considered in reasoned speculation to produce the result of every act.

Now Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to adopt another course of reasoning to indicate to us the necessity for giving up the fruits of all work. The conclusion that He reaches and the reasoning that He adopts will not be entirely unfamiliar to you; they are

re-stated here, as the subject-matter of discussion requires them. It is a natural and legitimate question to sak: Why should one give up attachment to the results of one's work, what is the reason behind the recommendation to renounce the sense of agency and the claim of ownership? To say that salvation can be attained only through renunciation is a fair and sufficient answer as far as it goes; but it provokes the further question: Why should salvation be withheld unreasonably from those who claim naturally the fruits of their own labour? There must be a convincing reason to prove to our satisfaction some kind of logical flaw in the statement that the labourer is worthy of his hire, which seems quite reasonable on the face of it. Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to point out the weakness in such an argument.

Let us take any action whatever. Consider, for example, the preparation of a table by a carpenter. It is easy to see that there is a close relation between the table and the labour of the carpenter, and between the labour of the carpenter and the carpenter himself. But for the labour of the carpenter, the table would not have been in existence, and but for the carpenter, no labour would have been put forth. We may now argue that the table belongs to the carpenter, who is entitled to whatever the table is worth, as he has been responsible for making the table. It may seem on a superficial examination that there is no flaw in this argument. But Śrī Kṛishṇa says that this course of reasoning is based on insufficient data. The labour of the carpenter is only one among the many factors that brought the table into existence. The established conclusions of speculative reasoning, He declares, recognise five elements as the causes that combine to produce the result of any work. What these five elements are, we will learn from the next verse.

Please note that I have interpreted the term, '*sāṅkhya*', occurring in this stanza in the sense of theory, of speculative reasoning. This meaning, of course, is quite familiar to you, as the term is used in this sense more than once in the course of the *Gītā*. Orthodox commentators understand by '*sāṅkhya*' here the *Vedānta*, as the system of Sāṅkhya, being atheistic, is not fully accepted by the *Vedāntins*. The translation adopted above, while it gets over the difficulty of tracing the authority for

Śrī Kṛishṇa's teaching on this important question to a non-Vedāntic and atheistic source, is fully in consonance with the etymological sense of the term.

अधिष्ठानं तथा कर्ता करणं च पृथग्विधम् ।
विविधाश्च पृथक्चेष्टा दैवं चैवात्र पञ्चमम् ॥ १४ ॥

14. The seat of action and likewise the agent, the various kinds of instruments and the different distinctive activities with Providence as the fifth (constitute the five causes enumerated above).

'*Adhishṭhāna*' may be roughly understood as the material on which work is performed. Reverting to the example of the carpenter, the wood on which he works is the *adhishṭhāna*. Another view is that the body of the agent is the *adhishṭhāna*. The word means literally 'basis' or 'seat'. We may look upon either the material on which work is performed or the body of the agent as the seat or the substratum of action. It appears to me, however, that since the word, '*karaṇa*', can be understood to mean the body, which is the instrument of the soul, it would be tautological to interpret '*adhishṭhāna*' also in the same sense. But those who take the view that '*adhishṭhāna*' refers to the body understand by '*karaṇa*' the various organs in the body. '*Kartṛi*' is the agent; in the example given above, it would stand for the soul of the carpenter. It is a difficult and controversial question whether and to what extent the soul may be considered as an agent. One school of thought is of opinion that all ethical mandates and prohibitions imply the agency of the soul; otherwise it is difficult to understand why the soul should suffer from the bondage of *karma*. It is frequently said that all our actions are impelled and executed by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*; that is quite true. But the capacity for potential work, for being the substratum of action, resides in the soul, and determines its inescapable moral responsibility. The attribution of ag ncy to the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* merely means that, in the world of *samsāra*, the necessity for work arises solely on account of the association of the soul with *prakṛiti* (*vide Śrībhāshya*, ii. 3. 33 *et seq*). The *Advaitins*, however, hold that the soul, which is identical with the Supreme *Brahman*, is *nish-kriya*; accordingly Śaṅkarāchārya

understands by the term, '*kartṛi*', here the Supreme *Brahman*, which is conditioned by limitations and which on account of these limitations imagines Itself to be the enjoyer of experiences.

'*Karaṇa*' is the instrument of the soul for the performance of work, that is to say, the body with all its limitations. The bodies of different persons differ in many respects; they do not possess the same capacity for work or achievement. The *prakṛiti* of one body may be preponderantly *sāttvika*, of another dominantly *rājasa*, and of yet another overwhelmingly *tāmasa*. Some again are born blind or deaf, others with defective limbs. The *karma* owned by one soul is different from that belonging to another; and so, too, the bodies which the influence of *karma* has built for the souls to reside in, differ from one another. By the term, '*cheshṭā*', may be understood any kind of physical activity. The carpenter uses his saw and chisel; sawing and chiselling are his *cheshṭā*. I am a teacher by profession; teaching is my *cheshṭā*. The body puts forth various kinds of activities; they are all *cheshṭās*. In regard to the making of the table by the carpenter, sawing, chiselling, planing and every other kind of activity that he indulges in constitute the various *cheshṭās* that contribute to the performance of his work. The orthodox commentators understand by the term, '*cheshṭā*', the functions of the five *vāyus* in the body—the *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *viyāna*, *udāna*, and *samāna*.

Now suppose we have all these four elements. There is the *adhishṭhāna*, the wood for the carpenter to work upon. There is the agent, the carpenter himself. There is his body, quite fit and capable of work. And there are the different kinds of activity that he puts forth. Even then, says Śrī Kṛishṇa, you do not have all the elements that contribute to the making of a table. The *siddhi* of the *karma* is not inevitable. Ordinarily, of course, given these, the table will be readily manufactured. But it is not difficult for you to imagine situations when, with the best will in the world and with the best material available, work suffers. Suppose, for instance, there is a fire which destroys the table before it is made. Or consider the construction of a bridge. The stone and the cement, the engineer and the workers may all be there, but a sudden and unexpected flood may wash everything away. The fact that there are such contingencies in life clearly indicates to us

the necessity for recognising something over and above these four factors as being essential for the successful completion of any work. Truly, there is many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip. The governing factor may be called chance, if you like, but it is better to regard it as Providential influence. It is taken for granted by all our commentators that the fifth element for the successful performance of any action, which is designated in this stanza by the term, '*daiva*', should not be understood in the sense of blind destiny or fate. To one who believes in God and recognises His guiding influence everywhere, chance or fate can mean only the guidance and control and wisdom of Providence. We will do well, therefore, to interpret the term, '*daiva*', as Providential guidance and control. This is the fifth requisite for the production of results from any action whatever. Let us guard ourselves against inferring from this that the obligation resting on us for the performance of our duties is in any way diminished by the recognition of the all-pervasive guidance of God. Nor should we be tempted into making mathematical interpretations, suggesting that the influence of Providence is inconsiderable, being only one-fifth. The underlying idea is that all the five factors have to co-operate before any fruit issues from any action. Providence is not solely responsible for the success of our work, and we are by no means justified in thrusting all responsibility on God and allowing our duties to remain undone.

Five factors then are responsible for producing results from any action whatever: *adhishṭhāna*, *kartṛi*, *karaṇa*, *cheshṭā* and *daiva*. Note that the soul is only one among the five factors. How can the soul claim the title to the fruits of any action? Suppose five people commit a robbery. The ill-gotten wealth will have to be shared by all the five. Imagine that one of the robbers is a bully and wants all the spoils for himself. Will not the other four protest? They will say: "We have also robbed along with you. Give us our shares." Not far dissimilar is the position of the soul which wants to indulge in *ahaṅkāra* and *mama-kāra*. In the light of what has been taught here, it is elementary common-sense to see that the *kartṛi* is only one among the many contributory causes giving rise to the results of any action. The *kartṛi* is, therefore, not justified in claiming the fruits of his action. He must give due credit to the other cardinal factors in the

situation. And when he further remembers that even the little responsibility he had in the matter had been thrust upon him by his forced association with *prakṛiti*, the basis of all egoism and pride is undermined.

Śrī Kṛishṇa further emphasises His teaching on this question in the next stanza.

शरीरवाङ्मनोभिर्यत्कर्म प्रारभते नरः ।
न्याय्यं वा विपरीतं वा पञ्चैते तस्य हेतवः ॥ १५ ॥

15. Whatever action a man performs with body, speech or mind, whether it is right or wrong, these five are its causes.

It may be asked whether Providence co-operates with the sinner in his nefarious activities. That is a difficult question to answer. According to the teaching given here, every action depends on five factors for its fruition and successful accomplishment. One of these five factors is undoubtedly the influence of Providence. And it is here clearly laid down that this influence is not to be excluded from any action on moral grounds. The question why God, being all-merciful and all-powerful, allows the sinner to sin, is not an easy one to answer. If speculation may be allowed on such high mysteries, it may be suggested that the gift of free will cost us that much. And it may be hoped that there is a plan and purpose behind the process of the universe, which will aim at the ultimate abolition of all sin and evil. In some such manner, we must reconcile ourselves to the existence of sin and injustice in the world.

तत्रैवं सति कर्तारमात्मानं केवलं तु यः ।
पश्यत्यकृतबुद्धित्वान्न स पश्यति दुर्मतिः ॥ १६ ॥

16. That being so, the man of perverse mind who looks upon himself as the sole agent on account of his undisciplined mind—he does not see at all.

Such being the case, the man who regards himself as the sole agent of any work can only be perverse. His understanding is

undisciplined. When the five causes enumerated above are responsible for the production of the results from any action, how can any one arrogate all responsibility and claim all credit to oneself? Even from the standpoint of the argument that the labourer is worthy of his hire, the feeling of *ahaṅkāra* cannot be justified. Five labourers, so to speak, play their part in this affair, and every one of them must be worthy of his hire. And specially how much the influence of *daiva* counts in all matters, we will be told later on. It is responsible in a far greater measure for the results of any action than all the other four causes put together. What has to be realised by us is the fact that the *kartṛi* ill deserves the fruits of any action. For in real truth he does little; the results are brought about mostly by the influence of *daiva*. The *kartṛi* who claims the fruits of his actions, is like that greedy robber who stretched out longing hands towards the entire proceeds of a co-operative dacoity. And one may add that the robber did not play an important part in the commission of the robbery even; he merely played the part of a sleeping sentinel, asked to keep watch from under the shade of a tree. So little is the achievement of the soul in bringing to fruition any work. Attachment to the results of one's work is, therefore, without the least justification, whatever the standpoint we may adopt.

It may be noted that this conclusion is valid whether we consider the soul to be real or unreal. In the former case, the soul is only one of five agents, and a very ineffectual agent at that If the individual soul is a mere reflection of God and thus illusory, the sense of agency must also be illusory. You may observe that, according to this interpretation, the term, '*ātman*' in the stanza will stand for the illusory finite self. In either case, one who thinks that one is entitled to the fruits of one's actions mistakes the position. Such a person claims what is not his to be his. Please allow me to conclude here our work today.

lxxvi

Last week, you may remember, we were dealing with the five causes for the successful accomplishment of any action. The soul, we have been repeatedly told, should not arrogate to itself the results of any action, which it is believed to perform. The reason

for this becomes clear, when we understand that the fruits of any action are brought into existence by no less than five factors. The soul is certainly one of these, but in addition to it there has to be some material on which the work is to be done, the body through whose instrumentality the work is carried out, and the various functional activities that go to constitute any work. Over and above these, there remains the guiding influence of Providence. Even the limited responsibility that is conceded to the soul by virtue of its being one of these five factors has to be judged in the light of the fact that, in the world of *saṃsāra*, the necessity for action on the part of the soul arises out of the pressure of its material contacts. It is, therefore, perverse to regard the soul as the sole agent of all activities and justify selfishness on that account. True wisdom must perceive the futility and folly of the feelings of *i-ness* and *mine-ness* even from the standpoint of the principle that every labourer is worthy of his hire. The outlook of the truly wise is enunciated once again by Śrī Kṛishṇa in the stanza with which we have to begin our work to-day.

यस्य नाहंकृतो भावो बुद्धिर्यस्य न लिप्यते ।
हत्वाऽपि स इमाँल्लोकान्न हन्ति न निबध्यते ॥ १७ ॥

17. He who is free from egoism and whose mind is not tainted (by attachment)—even though he kills these men, he kills not.

In contrast to the man of perverse mind who deludes himself into thinking that he is the agent of all the actions that he performs, the man of unsullied understanding renounces all sense of agency and thereby attains freedom. Whatever action he may do under a sense of duty cannot bind him by the bonds of *karma*. For, as we have learnt long ago, what binds is not action but the feeling of attachment that accompanies the action. One who acts only under a sense of duty and without attachment to the results of his work is relieved, we may say, from the responsibilities of an agent. His soul has nothing to do with the results of his work.

Now, let us consider Arjuna's position for a moment in the light of these facts. He is faced by the unpleasant task of killing his friends and kinsmen in war. He fears that fighting in the war

will foul him with sin. " Alas, alas," he protested to Śrī Kṛishṇa, " we have begun to commit a great sin, since, out of covetous desire to enjoy the kingdom and its pleasures, we have undertaken to kill our own kindred." (I. 45.) Śrī Kṛishṇa thereupon proceeds to show that attitude to be mistaken mainly on the ground that no sin can arise from the dispassionate performance of one's duty. Failure to do one's duty out of aversion to its fruits is certain to impose on the soul fresh fetters of *karma*. For flying from the post of duty is sin, *akaraṇe pratyavāyaḥ*. And here in this *śloka*, Śrī Kṛishṇa points out specifically to Arjuna, in accents reminiscent of His teaching in the second chapter, that his soul will not be sullied, even if he kills out of a sense of duty those who oppose him in battle.

Though he kills, he kills not. For in the first place what is real and essential in both the slayer and the slain is the immortal soul, which can neither kill nor be killed. And secondly, one who kills under a sense of duty cannot claim any sense of agency, and is, therefore, not the agent of the act of killing. Actions like these cannot bind the soul and impose on it the bonds of *karma*. It is well to remind you once again that Śrī Kṛishṇa's arguments for inducing Arjuna to fight in the war do not rest entirely on the fact of the immortality of the soul. It is also an essential part of His teaching that duty done as duty without selfish motive of any kind cannot give rise to sin. The soldier who does his duty unselfishly, does not become stained with sin.

It has been shown that the immortality of the soul and its essential difference from matter lead us logically to the conclusion that the performance of duty is obligatory ; and when that duty happens to be—as it som-times has to be—the infliction of death, the established immortality of the soul dulls the keen edge of the terror of death and makes the soldier realise that, in dealing out death, he is not destroying the real destiny of him on whom death is inflicted. Like the perfect teacher that He is, Śrī Kṛishṇa takes every opportunity of showing to Arjuna the practical consequences of His teaching, when applied to the situation that is confronting Arjuna. The general conclusions that are deduced from the ultimate postulates of metaphysics are elucidated in their specific bearing on the problem of Arjuna. It is shown to him that it is

his imperative duty to fight in the war and that the performance of one's duty in the right spirit can never lead one to bondage.

Now, we all know that it is essential for all of us to place ourselves more and more under the sway of *sattva-guṇa*, if we are to realise that the soul is not the agent of the work that is carried out by the embodiments in which it dwells from time to time. And for this purpose, it is desirable to know what kind of work is *sāttvika*, what is *rājasa* and what is *tāmasa*. With this object in view, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to analyse, in the first instance, the impulse to action and the essential constituents of action.

ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं परिज्ञाता त्रिविधा कर्मचोदना ।
करणं कर्म कर्तेति त्रिविधः कर्मसङ्ग्रहः ॥ १८ ॥

18. Knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knowing subject, these form the threefold incitement to action; and the instrument, the action and the agent form the three constituents of action.

The analysis of action that is made in this stanza can be easily followed, if we try to trace the history of any action from its very commencement. Thought, as we all know, is action in embryo. And even here certain stages may be easily distinguished. First of all, there is a feeling or a notion that a thing has to be done. This may arise from a sense of duty or out of a desire for the fulfilment of certain ends in view. In regard to *Vedic* commands, it has been argued that action starts with a vague notion of an intent to obey as soon as the scriptural imperative is heard. However, for our purpose, we need not confine ourselves to religious activities only. Take, for instance, such an action as the making of a table by a carpenter. There is, in the first place, a purpose behind the action, which initiates the will. It is here described as *jñeya*, that which is to be known—known, that is, in terms of action. In this case, it is the idea of a table; without this there can be no making of a table. This is the immediate purpose of the action, though the action may have been undertaken with the object of earning money by selling the table. This is, so to speak, the first stage of the action. Secondly, there has to be knowledge of the actual process of action. As soon as there is a prompting of the will, there is an

attempt to translate the impulse into action. This can be immediately done, if the actual procedure is known. In our example, it is the craft of the carpenter. If this is not known, then there will be an attempt to learn it. Lastly, there must be a realisation by the agent that he is actuated by the purpose of the action and that he knows how to get it done. In other words, the agent has to realise his capacity for the action. There can be no poetry, if all poets are content to remain mute inglorious Miltons. It is only under these circumstances that any action can be begun ; these are the essential factors of the psychological preparation that leads to action. This analysis of the impulse to action is probably undertaken by Śrī Krishṇa with a view to stress the importance of motive in bringing about an action.

After the knowing stage, the doing stage. For an action to take place actually, all the five factors mentioned before have to co-operate. The knower has to become the doer or cause some one else to become the doer. And for this he must have ready at hand the instruments through which and the material on which action is performed ; and he must bring into play the various locomotor activities that the particular course of action needs. Furthermore, the influence of Providence must favour the fulfilment of the action. Let us now proceed to analyse an action which is an accomplished fact. Grant at the outset that the influence of Providence is directed to the fulfilment of the action. And to make the position clear, consider once again the case of the carpenter and the table. The action of making the table involves the agent and the instruments he wields, the wood of which the table is made, and the actual making of the table itself. Every action presupposes, apart from the action itself, an agent and the material on which the action is wrought. You will note that, even when the analysis of action is confined to action itself and fails to take note of such extraneous considerations as Providential influence, the responsibility of the agent is shared by other factors.

It may be observed in passing that the authoritative commentators do not agree in their interpretations of this *śloka*. To Śaṅkarāchārya, the whole concept of action is unreal. The agent is the Absolute under the spell of *māyā*. Apart from this, it is

also to be noted, he interprets the word, '*karma*', as the object of the action and thus makes it correspond more or less with the term, '*jñeyaṁ*', in the first line. Rāmānujāchārya confines the significance of the term, '*karma*', in the expressions, '*karma-chodanā*' and '*karma-saṅgraha*', to religious activities alone. Action is real in his view. He takes a sacrifice, such as the *jyotishṭoma*, as typical of religious activity in general. In relation to it, the *karaṇa* comprises all the materials needed for the performance of the sacrifice, the *karma* is the sacrifice itself, and the *kartṛi* is the performer. Madhvāchārya in his comments on this verse stresses the point that the individual soul is not an independent agent, but is under the control and guidance of God. Nevertheless, the mandates and prohibitions of morality apply to the soul. He adds that Śrī Kṛishṇa here warns us against the plausible inference from the previous stanza that the soul cannot act and, therefore, cannot enter into any relations with the moral law.

After giving us in this manner an analysis of the impulse to action itself, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to take important factors from this analysis and subjects them to classification under the categories of *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*.

ज्ञानं कर्म च कर्ता च त्रिधैव गुणभेदतः ।
प्रोच्यते गुणसङ्ख्याने यथावच्छृणु तान्यपि १९ ॥

19. Knowledge, action and agent—in the context which enumerates the *guṇas*, each of these is said to be of three different kinds according to the differences of the *guṇas*. Hear about them as they are.

Śrī Kṛishṇa now quite definitely declares that He proposes to deal at length with only three of the six factors noted in the previous stanza. Only *jñāna*, *karma* and *kartṛi* are to be taken up for consideration. This economy of plan necessitates, however, that the terms should be understood with an extended significance. *Jñāna*, for instance, is not mere knowledge. It stands for much that is implied in the terms, '*jñeya*', '*jñāna*' and '*parijñātṛi*', mentioned in verse 18. The immediate purpose of the action, as envisaged in the mind of the agent before he sets out to act, the

knowledge of the actual procedure of the action, and a realisation by the agent that he is quite capable of carrying out the work to be done—so much may well be implied by the term. In other words, it stands for our whole philosophy of conduct. That, in adopting this view, we are not freely drawing from our fancy will be shown quite clearly by the next three verses. In like manner, by the term, '*karma*', we must understand the action itself along with the instruments through which and the materials on which it is carried out. The term, '*kartṛi*', of course is easily understood.

It may be noted that the classification hereafter discussed has for its object the teaching that we should all observe the rule of equality and do our duties without attachment of any kind. The same lesson is emphasised first from the standpoint of the motive, then of the action and, lastly, from the point of view of the agent. For the purpose of this teaching, of course, action and motive and agent have to be considered together, and the consideration of any one involves the other two; but there are delicate variations in emphasis according to the standpoint that we adopt. This will become plain as we study the stanzas in question. It may also be noted here that the term, '*guṇa-saṅkhyāna*', occurring in the first line of this *śloka*, has also been understood to refer to the science which considers the nature of the *guṇas*, namely, the system of Sāṅkhya founded by Kapila.

सर्वभूतेषु येनैकं भावमव्ययमीक्षते ।
अविभक्तं विभक्तेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि सात्त्विकम् ॥ २० ॥

20. Know that knowledge as *sāttvika,* which sees the same unchangeable entity in all things, undivided among things (apparently) divided.

It is believed by all the authoritative teachers who have commented on the *Gītā*, that this verse deals with the fundamental philosophic outlook which determines our activities generally. The term, '*jñāna*', is understood in a broad sense. Opinion, however, is divided as to the true import conveyed by this *śloka*, each school of philosophy seeking support for its own conclusions here. The entity alluded to here is understood by the *Advaitins*

to be the Absolute without attributes, which appears through *māyā* to be the differentiated universe that we see around us. Madhvāchārya also takes this entity to be the Supreme Soul, though his conception of the unity predicated of it is, of course, vastly different. According to Rāmānujāchārya, it is only the individual soul that is spoken of in this verse. The universe, he says, is peopled by different kinds of embodiments and seems a variegated thing. But essentially all souls are similar to one another. They are all of the nature of knowledge and enjoy equal status. And while the embodiments they dwell in from time to time may perish, they remain eternally.

You are at liberty to adopt any interpretation that you like. But please observe that whatever ambiguity there may be in the stanza to give rise to these differences in interpretation, there can be no ambiguity as regards the course of conduct that is recommended by implication here. All these different points of view agree about the rule of equality. If we hold that all souls are essentially similar to one another, the distinctions that we base on the differences among the various embodiments cease to possess any importance. The realisation of the spiritual equality of all embodied beings leads us to the rule of *samatva* and service ; the expression of this realisation in external conduct forms the acid test for that realisation. The same conclusion is inevitable also for those who think that there is only one Supreme Soul who appears as the differentiated universe through *māyā*. Distinctions then become not merely unimportant, they cease to be real as well. Whatever view we may hold regarding the question whether the spiritual entity pervading this universe consists of one soul or many souls, the rule of equality is equally binding. And because the course of conduct based on the life of equality has been shown in many contexts to be the best, we are here told that the philosophic outlook inducing such a course of conduct is *sāttvika*. The *jñāna* mentioned here includes the *jñeya*, the object of knowledge, the goal of action. And as it must be understood with a volitional significance, it includes the *parijñātṛi* as well. In short, the term, '*jñāna*', stands here for a philosophy of action, integrating our activities and giving order and direction to our lives. It is not knowledge that remains in the void, but that clarity of vision which is the immediate stimulus to well-ordered activity.

पृथक्त्वेन तु यज्ज्ञानं नानाभावान्पृथग्विधान् ।
वेत्ति सर्वेषु भूतेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि राजसम् ॥ २१ ॥

21. But the knowledge which knows by differentiation the various entities in all beings as of different kinds—know that knowledge to be *rājasa*.

The life of the large majority of men is not led in obedience to the rule of equality. We are apt to make all kinds of distinctions—especially such distinctions as lead us to selfishness. We make a primary and fundamental distinction between ourselves and the rest of the universe. Our whole life is coloured by this obsession, and in its wake come numerous petty distinctions. Few of us have the clear vision of the seer, who regards alike the dog and the elephant, the sinner and the saint—who sees in them all the root reality of the soul. The feelings of *i-ness* and *mine-ness* make us believe that we are different from one another and that the good is synonymous with whatever may be to our liking or in our interests. Differentiation is the basis of egoism. Neither from the standpoint of the essential characteristics of the soul, nor from the standpoint of the essential characteristics of the embodiment can any one being be really distinguished from any other. It goes without saying that those who believe that there is only one soul and that the appearance of the universe as differentiated is illusory cannot accept the view of the common individual, to whose untrained vision all the beings appear varying and different.

When our life is dominated by a sense of the acute differences among things generally and the difference between our own selves and the rest of the world primarily, we are apt to lead a life of aggressive selfishness. Most of the evil in the world is to be traced to this warped outlook. We become greedy for the good things of the world, and in our scramble for getting them, we try to hurt and harm others, though we may end mostly in hurting ourselves. The distorted vision that sees only inequality in all things cannot lead us to self-realisation or God-realisation. It strengthens the chains of *karma*, keeps us bound to desire and makes us ever discontented. Such a philosophy of action is *rājasa*. It may be

noted here that Śaṅkarāchārya considers that this verse condemns all systems of philosophy which are based on distinctions between the self and the Lord. This view, however, does not naturally commend itself to the exponents of those schools of the *Vedānta* which are not monistic.

यत्तु कृत्स्नवदेकस्मिन् कार्ये सक्तमहैतुकम् ।
अतत्त्वार्थवदल्पं च तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥ २२ ॥

22. That knowledge is declared to be *tāmasa,* which is attached unreasonably to one action as if it were all, which relates to unreal things and which is poor (in results).

Delusion may sink us in greater depths. We may become so narrow in outlook as to become obsessed with the petty interests of life to the exclusion of everything else. We may lose our sense of proportion and perspective, and become perversely heedless of the true scale of values. Some insignificant and inevitably selfish purpose may have us in its hold, and it may seem that its accomplishment is everything to us. The result may be poor, the object sought for unreal or illusory. Nevertheless, with a zeal worthy of a better purpose and without, indeed, any idea of the existence of a better purpose, we may occupy ourselves with mean and unworthy objects and frustrate our lives. Such delusive obsessions make our philosophy of action *tāmasa*. The light of truth is then wholly hidden from us, and our possition is even lower down the scale than that of those who are merely *rājasa*. For it is more difficult to rise from this mire of ignorance to the bracing mountain-heights of *sāttvika-jñāna* than from the level of *rājasa* selfishness.

It has been suggested that there is here a reference to the worship of spirits and ghosts. Those who offer this worship feel that the Powers before whom they bow down in homage are all-in-all, even though the basis of their faith is superstition more or less. Such worship, of course, will be poor in results. The truth of things requires that worship should be offered to the one immanent and transcendent God. In this sense, such worship may be said to relate to unreal things. It may also be noted here that Śaṅkarāchārya looks upon this verse too as condemning by implication all dualistic systems of thought.

Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to discuss the varieties of ***karma***.

नियतं सङ्गरहितमरागद्वेषतः कृतम् ।
अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यत्तत्सात्त्विकमुच्यते ॥ २३ ॥

23. That action is called *sāttvika*, which is obligatory, which is devoid of attachment, and which is carried out without desire or aversion by one who does not long for its fruits.

Once again we are taught that we have to do our duties without attachment to their fruits and without caring for the comfort or discomfort that may meet us during their performance. Please observe that Śrī Kṛishṇa considers only those actions ***sāttvika*** which are obligatory. Actions other than duties, actions which we do for the satisfaction of our desires—these are relegated to a lower position. Some of you may wonder what nice shade of meaning distinguishes '*saṅga*' from '*rāga-dvesha*'. It has been suggested that while '*sāṅga*' may be understood in the sense of attachment, the expression, '*rāga-dvesha*', may be taken to stand for desire for fame and aversion to ill-fame.

In telling us all this, of course, Śrī Kṛishṇa is trying to teach the same lesson in regard to duty from various standpoints—from the point of view of the motive with which the action is done, of the action itself and of the agent. We are here shown the best type of action, considered in itself. The lesson taught, of course, is nothing new. You must bear in mind that, in this last chapter of the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛishṇa is rounding up His teachings, and very naturally there are allusions to and reminiscences of the teachings begun in Chapter II and concluded here.

यत्तु कामेप्सुना कर्म साहङ्कारेण वा पुनः ।
क्रियते बहुलायासं तद्राजसमुदाहृतम् ॥ २४ ॥

24. That action, however, is called *rājasa*, which is done by one who has pride and attachment, and which is performed with a great deal of effort.

Those who live selfishly perform *rājasa* actions. They are attached to the fruits of their work, they are impelled by pride and egoism. They labour ceaselessly for their own selfish advancement, but being the slaves of desire, they can never integrate their lives and enjoy peace and contentment. They will have to work restlessly, distractedly, toiling and travailing; and frequently the objects of their quest elude them. For those who are restless after this fashion, there can never come that effortless grace of manner which springs from the clear vision and ordered purpose of the *sāttvika* life. There is beauty in the spectacle of power held in reserve and of difficult things being done effortlessly. But those whose will cannot impose a direction to their lives, and who identify themselves with fluctuating desires, cannot acquire that serenity of spirit and sense of detachment which make for easy and attractive performance of work. And even after all this labour, what is it that they gain? Hardly a moment's satisfaction.

We must not judge the value of the result by the amount of labour expended. You may recall the reflections of the English essayist, when he watched the feats of Indian jugglers. He confessed himself quite incapable of doing the least difficult of their feats, but wondered at the same time whether they had any lasting value. *Rājasa* actions, performed with so much zest and effort, stand in the same category. They can never win the supreme blessing of peace or freedom for the soul. Endless worry gnaws at the hearts of those who perform them. Desire after masterful desire has them in its hold and deprives them of even a moment's peace. It is verily a case of a mountain in travail producing a mouse. From the standpoint of the true destiny of their souls, the results of their labour are not merely insignificant. They are positively mischievous as well, in that they create fresh bonds of *karma*.

अनुबन्धं क्षयं हिंसामनपेक्ष्य च पौरुषम् ।
मोहादारभ्यते कर्म यत्तत्तामसमुच्यते ॥ २५ ॥

25. That action is called *tāmasa* which is begun through delusion, without regard to consequences, loss, injury or strength.

Selfishness is bad enough. Lower down the scale is the delusion of ignorance, of intellectual incompetence. To start an action with false notions is to sow the seeds for a harvest of troubles to ourselves and others. When we start an undertaking without a proper estimate of our capacity or of our means, failure is inevitable; and if the work should have any kind of social importance, the failure will affect the whole of society. Those who are *tāmasa* have false faith in themselves and rush into action without weighing well the consequences. They are p rversely heedless of their own incapacity, of the injury that they may do to themselves or others, of the certain failure that must meet them. We have already been taught that we must not indulge in actions other than our duties. We must bring a high seriousness into play in determining what our duties are; and once that is done, we must carry out our duties without undue attachment, but earnestly and well.

Detachment is not indifference. In doing our duties we must feel a sense of responsibility, as of a trustee discharging his trust. Wanton intellectual blindness is, therefore, rightly held to be a characteristic of *tāmasa* action. The teaching that we have no rights to the fruits of our work must not be misinterpreted to mean that our actions may be allowed to fail by negligence or want of care on our part. Failures must not discourage us, but they must not be of our making. It is good to be free from the possessive spirit of egoism in doing our work, but we must also bear in mind that doing our duties is a high and serious responsibility, the only rightful occupation for us in life. We must, therefore, bring to bear on the performance of our duties all our qualities. To misjudge our duty in life is blameworthy; not less heinous is the offence of performing it carelessly or indifferently.

Please allow me to conclude here our work for to-day.

lxxvii

Last week we were dealing with the classification of deeds and motives in accordance with the several *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. We learnt the characteristics of the motives which are *sāttvika* in character, we saw what kinds of motives are *rājasa* or *tāmasa*. We learnt too to classify deeds under the categories of *sāttvika*,

rājasa and *tāmasa*. Every agent can be viewed both from the standpoint of the motive within and from the standpoint of the deed done. The internal conditions of the mind were first analysed and classified; and then we were taught the method of evaluating the external performance of work. In what we have to do today the same classification is continued and extended to the agent himself. Śrī Kṛishṇa describes the best type of agent thus:

मुक्तसङ्गोऽनहंवादी धृत्युत्साहसमन्वितः ।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योर्निर्विकारः कर्ता सात्त्विक उच्यते ॥ २६ ॥

26. That agent is *sāttvika* who is free from attachment, who is not selfish, who is endowed with firm resolve and enthusiasm, and who is not affected by success or failure.

Firmness of will, enthusiasm and evenness of disposition, these are the essential qualities that Śrī Kṛishṇa requires of the *karma-yogin*. A wavering will cannot keep us on the rugged path of duty. Mere firmness of will must not also be allowed to degenerate into obstinacy or conventional routine. It must become mellowed and lit up with enthusiasm. Evenness of disposition has also been commended by Śrī Kṛishṇa in many passages. As I have often pointed out to you, this must not be confounded with indifference. According to Śrī Kṛishṇa, our obligation in regard to the performance of duty involves, firstly, the manifestation of enthusiasm and the absence of indifference in regard to the performance of the duty itself and, secondly, the manifestation of indifference in regard to the results that accrue from the performance of the duty.

You will all remember the famous definition that *yoga* is skill in the performance of the duty that falls to our lot. (*Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*, II. 50.) Any work can be done well only when we have such mental qualities as a strong will and the divine fire of enthusiasm. Resolution is needed to see that our duty is done against all obstacles, and enthusiasm is required to incite us to get the work done as well and as soon as possible. This enthusiasm must not, however, give us a possessive interest

in the results of the work. Whether there is success or failure, we must not feel agitated; elation should not accompany success and depression should not result from failure. We must maintain equanimity under all circumstances.

रागी कर्मफलप्रेप्सुर्लुब्धो हिंसात्मकोऽशुचिः ।
हर्षशोकान्वितः कर्ता राजसः परिकीर्तितः ॥ २७ ॥

27. That agent is spoken of as *rājasa* who is swayed by desire, who yearns for the fruit of his actions, who is covetous, harmful and impure, and who is subject to joy and sorrow.

The aggressive selfishness of those who are *rājasa* is clearly described here. The term, '*rāgin*', which I have rendered as one who is swayed by desire, implies that the desire mentioned is in regard to pleasurable sensations and experiences. The desire to have more and more of agreeable sensations and experiences is a true characteristic of the *rājasa* type of people. Along with it there is the longing to enjoy the fruits of one's labours. This kind of slavery to desire is also likely to lead to covetousness. The tendency of covetousness is to make for eternal discontent. It makes us think that the end and aim of life is to accumulate the means for the enjoyment of pleasurable experiences. The miser's parsimony and greed are due to this anxiety to gather the means for the enjoyment of pleasures, though, more often than not, the pleasures for whose enjoyment all this feverish hoarding of wealth takes place are never enjoyed. Greed and desire show no quarter to obstacles standing in their way; they are removed ruthlessly. No one who is swayed by desire and greed can be anything but cruel. It is in his very nature to injure others who either consciously or unconsciously oppose the fulfilment of his desires. A mind tainted by greed and cruelty in this manner is necessarily impure. Finally, the *rājasa* agent is declared to be subject to pleasure and pain. This means, of course, that he feels elated at success and depressed at failure. Suppose you cultivate your field and reap a bumper harvest, because rain and soil have been kind to you; if you are *rājasa*, you will then feel exhilaration. If, however, it should so happen that the harvest is poor, even though it may be for reasons beyond

your control, you will feel depressed. In other words, the *rājasa kartṛi* has not cultivated the art of preserving equanimity in relation to success and failure.

अयुक्तः प्राकृतः स्तब्धः शठो नैकृतिकोऽलसः ।
विषादी दीर्घसूत्री च कर्ता तामस उच्यते ॥ २८ ॥

28. That agent is styled *tāmasa* who is wanting in application, vulgar, obstinate, perverse, deceitful, lazy, complaining and procrastinating.

The agent who is under the influence of the *tamoguṇa* will never apply himself steadily to his work, but will often play the truant from his job. He will be vulgar, untutored by culture or civilisation. Lacking discernment and refinement, he will be perversely obstinate under the feeling that he knows all. Deceit and trickery will come naturally to him. The essential *tāmasa* characteristic, however, is laziness and its kindred qualities. You may have met with people who are always complaining, whatever work they may be asked to do. That tendency often accompanies and, perhaps, results from constitutional indolence. The term, '*dīrgha-sūtrin*,' beautifully describes the attitude of the *tāmasa* agent. Literally, it means one who has a long string. Think of the work that he has to do as passing to the end of the string. The *tāmasa* agent will never reach the other end of the thread. That is to say, he will be indolent and procrastinating.

बुद्धेर्भेदं धृतेश्चैव गुणतस्त्रिविधं शृणु ।
प्रोच्यमानमशेषेण पृथक्त्वेन धनंजय ॥ २९ ॥

29. Listen, O Arjuna, to the threefold classification —according to the *gunas* of *prakriti*—of intellect and of will, which will be described distinctly and completely.

Of the six factors into which action was analysed, Śrī Kṛishṇa took up for consideration three, and subjected them to classification under the categories of *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*. He proceeds now to deal with a similar classification of intellect, will and pleasure, with the object of making it easy for us to live the life of dispassionate performance of duty. Of course, most of

what He proposes to teach now has been learnt by us explicitly or implicitly in the course of our study of the *Gītā* already. Here is only a summary of conclusions already taught or implied.

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च कार्याकार्ये भयाभये ।
बन्धं मोक्षं च या वेत्ति बुद्धिस्सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी ॥ ३० ॥

30. That intellectual disposition, O Arjuna, is *sāttvika* which understands action and renunciation, what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, fear and freedom from fear, bondage and liberty.

According to the philosophy of conduct taught by Śrī Kṛishṇa, we are not completely at the mercy of irrational or unexplainable impulses in the regulation of our conduct. While recognising the part played by natural instincts and desires in impelling the activities of our life, Śrī Kṛishṇa has also taught that the enlightened understanding can direct the will and that the will so directed can order our life. The nature of the enlightened understanding is here summed up.

Its first characteristic is here declared to be its ability to distinguish between *pravṛitti* and *nivṛitti*. We all know that this is not an easy thing to do. In fact, it may be said that the whole of the *Gītā* was taught to Arjuna to enable him to realise the truth about *pravṛitti* and *nivṛitti*. *Nivṛitti* is usually understood to be complete abstention from action of any kind whatever, and *pravṛitti* as the performance of selfish action. Śrī Kṛishṇa has, however, repeatedly taught us that these notions are wrong. Any one who is labouring strenuously for his selfish interests, cannot be said to be living the life of *pravṛitti*; and by the same token, one who has succeeded, if it is possible, in converting himself into a log of wood and remains a monument of passive inaction, cannot be said to be living the life of *nivṛitti*. Rightly understood, *pravṛitti* and *nivṛitti* do not contradict each other. It is possible for us to live a life of *pravṛitti* and at the same time to practise *nivṛitti*. We have been bidden to reconcile the practice of these two in our lives; that, indeed, has been held to be the highest ideal of conduct. You all know, of course, the manner in which this reconciliation is to be effected. We have to live a life of

strenuous labour, but we must labour in a dedicated spirit, giving up the fruits of our work and without the least taint of selfish attachment. Our duties have to be performed with a determined will and with enthusiasm; but we must manage at the same time to divest ourselves of any possessive interest in the results accruing from the performance of those duties. The *sāttvika* understanding will distinguish between *pravṛitti* and *nivṛitti* in this manner and help one to secure the final release of *moksha*.

Another characteristic of the *sāttvika* intelligence is that it can differentiate between what is duty and what is not. You may remember that we have been taught that the duties that fall to the lot of men are determined by their natural fitness for the performance of those duties. A man lacking courage and strength cannot be a soldier; a dullard who is incapable of abstract reasoning is not qualified to be a philosopher. Every kind of work in life requires qualification, a sort of fitness on the part of the worker. If a person who has the qualification for one kind of work does another kind of work, then he cannot be said to have understood the nature of *kārya* and *akārya*. To one who is qualified by birth and breeding for the vocation of a soldier, it is *akārya* to adopt the life of mendicant asceticism. In order that the machine of social organisation may function, various duties have to be performed by different members of society. The duties of each are determined by individual mental and moral qualifications.

When we consider this question from the standpoint of function and qualification, or of *karma* and *guṇa*, as we may say, we get a broad classification of men into *varṇas*. The natural qualifications of men determine the functions that they have to perform in society; and these qualifications considered along with their correlated duties enable us to divide the members of society into distinct groups. There may be exceptions to this rule or principle of classification, but in the large majority of cases, it works well enough. Whatever duty is determined for us by the potentialities of our nature in this manner is *kārya*; all other duties are *akārya*. It is not very difficult to see why work for which we are not fitted is *akārya* in relation to us. From the standpoint of social economy, the waste involved in maladjustment

of qualities and functions is patent enough. If unfit persons are given responsible duties, the social machine is run inefficiently and with a great amount of avoidable friction. Worse results too may follow. If a man thoroughly unfitted to play the role of a philosopher or a moral guide assumes that position, for instance, he may succeed in propagating mischievous and dangerous doctrines. Society, on the whole, is sure to suffer by men undertaking to perform duties for which they are not fit.

It is true, of course, that every kind of work is required by society, that, in regard to it, all functions from that of the scavenger to that of the sovereign are *kārya*. Every kind of functionary is required by society, and from the standpoint of society as a whole no function is *akārya*. The distinction between *kārya* and *akārya* arises only when we consider the life of the individual in relation to the life of society. It is determined by the part that the individual has to play in the collective social life. Everyone may judge for himself the part that he has to play by realising the nature of the *guṇa* which is predominant in him and adjusting his work accordingly. It is taught in the *Gītā* that, for the individual, failure in the performance of his duty is better than success in the performance of what is *akārya*. We tried to understand the meaning of this apparent paradox, when we studied III. 35 (*vide* Vol. I, pp. 269–75). To try to live a life for which we are not qualified is tantamount to coercing nature and will injure the very potentialities of our moral and spiritual development. The maintenance of order in society would become well-nigh impossible, if people are allowed to perform functions for which they are not fit. The performance by one of what is *akārya* in relation to him is thus injurious to him and to the society to which he may belong. It is declared here that a *sattvika* understanding is required for understanding this truth about duty.

A third characteristic of the *sāttvika* intelligence is its ability to understand fear and courage. You will remember the teaching of Śrī Kṛishṇa on the psychology of fear. With your permission I shall briefly refer again to the salient points of this teaching. *Rāga* and *kāma* arise, as you know, out of the pleasurable sensations produced by the impact of the external world on our senses. Every one affected by *rāga* and *kāma* has a craving for

having more and more of those pleasurable sensations. Among such bondslaves to desire, there may very easily arise rivalry and competition. These in turn lead to clashes and skirmishes ; anger and hate follow in their wake. Let us now concentrate our attention on the state of mind of one at the moment when a hated and powerful rival is pressing his endeavours to obtain something for which one has all along been striving. Then there arises the feeling that the rival may be too strong to be defeated. That is fear, the expectation that one may not succeed in one's endeavours to obtain the pleasures and the power that one has been desiring. The intensity of this fear will be dependent on the intensity of one's attachment to pleasure on the one hand, and the knowledge that one has of the superiority of one's rival on the other. At the root of fear, it may thus be seen, lies our attachment to pleasures. Slavery to desire enslaves us to fear as well. When there is no attachment, there can be no anger and no fear. To know that fear arises out of our attachment to pleasures and that we gain freedom from fear when we rid ourselves of attachment is to understand the secret of fear and fearlessness.

Bandha is the bondage of *karma*, which compels the immaterial soul to become imprisoned in a material embodiment through a series of incarnations. If one knows the reason for this bondage and knows also the method of deliverance, then one understands the aims of life and the manner in which they may be attained. We have already been taught that the immaterial and immortal soul suffers a diminution of its powers in a state of embodiment, and that self-realisation ought to be the end and aim of the lives of all reasonable men. The imprisonment of the soul in flesh, we have also been told, is due to the impressed tendencies of *karma* arising from the nature of the life that the soul leads from time to time. If these are wiped away, then the soul will be able to realise its own essential nature.

To help us to do this, Śrī Kṛishṇa, following the *Upanishads*, teaches that work in itself does not cling to man. The deeds that you do, the thoughts that you think, or the words that you utter cannot by themselves cause bondage for your soul. What creates the bondage is the disposition with which these things are done. If there is selfish attachment dominating us at the time of

performance, then bondage will ensue. Otherwise, no bonds of *karma* will be produced. Thus, the fetters of *karma* that bind the soul are not due to our mental, vocal or physical activities; they arise from the temperament of the thinker, speaker or worker. If we think or speak or work without selfish attachment of any kind, the work or speech or thought cannot bind us. Once we know this, we can solve the problem of getting deliverance for our souls. If we take care to see that the mental disposition which tends to produce the bondage is properly controlled, then the bondage cannot continue; we cut off its roots, so to speak. The finest intelligence is required to grasp this vital truth about bondage and emancipation.

यया धर्ममधर्मं च कार्यं चाकार्यमेव च ।
अयथावत्प्रजानाति बुद्धिस्सा पार्थ राजसी ॥ ३१ ॥

31. That intellectual disposition, O Arjuna, is *rājasa*, by which duty and what is not duty, and what ought to be done and what ought not to be done are understood to be other than what they really are.

If one is not endowed with the *sāttvika* understanding, one is bound more or less to misunderstand the nature of one's duty. If you bestow your thought on this subject for a moment, you will see that there are really two ways of misunderstanding your duty. You may look upon something which is not your duty as your duty. This is one way, and few of us are above straying into it. You may also regard the very thing which is the exact contrary of your duty, as your duty. Here it is laid down that the first type of misunderstanding is the result of a *rājasa* intelligence.

Let us now seek to understand the significance of the expressions, '*dharma*' and '*adharma*', '*kārya*' and '*akārya*'. The term, '*dharma*', has acquired such a wide and varied significance in Sanskrit that it is always a matter of difficulty to fix its exact connotation in any context. Paying due regard to the context here, I venture to think that we will not be far wrong, if we understand the expression, '*dharma*', here to stand for the duty which is obligatory. It follows that what is contrary to *dharma* is *adharma*.

You may now ask: How are we to differentiate *kārya* from *dharma*? The term, '*kārya*', seems to me to define the appropriateness of a particular kind of work being done by a particular person. Let us consider a specific instance, the case of a philosopher teaching. When we say that teaching moral truths is the *kārya* of the philosopher, we mean that it is the most appropriate thing for him to do. The concept of *dharma* implies something more; it includes the idea of moral responsibility as well. So, when we say that teaching is the *dharma* of the philosopher, we mean that the philosopher is morally responsible for the work of teaching. Thus, by '*kārya*', we must understand that a certain work is appropriate in relation to a particular individual. The term, '*dharma*', conveys that there is a moral responsibility resting on the shoulders of a man possessing certain characteristics to perform certain kinds of work. Teaching philosophy is the *kārya* of the philosopher; it is the most appropriate work for him to do. Teaching philosophy again is the *dharma* of the philosopher; for he who possesses the qualities of a philosopher must perform the work of a philosopher. Between the fitness of a philosopher to teach and the work of teaching, there is a correlation, and when we make this correlation so binding as to compel the person who possesses the needed qualification to become morally responsible for the work for which he is qualified, we have the idea of *dharma*.

Judging the duties that men have to perform from the angle of moral responsibility, we have the ideas of *dharma* and *adharma*; and judging those duties from the standpoint of their appropriateness in relation to the qualities of the persons who perform them, we have the ideas of *kārya* and *akārya*. Now, if we regard something other than our *dharma* as our *dharma* and something other than our *kārya* as our *kārya*, then we misunderstand them in a manner which is characteristically *rājasa*. Arjuna trying to play the role of a philosopher testifies only to the *rajasa* nature of his intelligence.

We will now pass on to the consideration of the second type of misunderstanding which was referred to above.

अधर्मं धर्ममिति या मन्यते तमसावृता ।
सर्वार्थान्विपरीतांश्च बुद्धिस्सा पार्थ तामसी ॥ ३२ ॥

32. That intellectual disposition is *tāmasa*, O Arjuna, which, enveloped in delusion, regards what is contrary to one's duty as one's duty and all things as the opposite of what they are.

The *buddhi* which operates rightly in determining the duties and responsibilites of men is *sāttvikī*. But the *buddhi* which operates with imperfect success in this work may misinterpret the nature of our duties in one of two ways. It may look upon some duty which is not ours as our duty. It may make the soldier try to play the part of a philosopher or a philosopher play the part of a soldier. Then it is *rājasa*. It may also make us confound the very opposite of our duties as our duties. Then it is *tāmasa*. The philosopher playing the part of a fool is under the sway of a *tāmasa* intelligence. When we mistake darkness for light, transient joy for eternal bliss, the Supreme Soul for the ephemeral veil that hides It from our eyes, we are swayed by the dull and perverse *tāmasa-guṇa*. You must note specially that the *tāmasa* intelligence is not merely dull and stupid, but perverse also. It has a knack of pitching upon what is exactly contrary to the object of its search, be that what it may.

From this nadir of sheer perversity, we have to rise to the level of the *rājasa* intelligence which commits honest mistakes by its being associated with predilections and prejudices arising out of attachment. It is a known fact of psychology that our intelligence fails to function properly when prejudices and desires stand in the way. The wish is quite frequently father to the thought. Reasoning is for us very often only the delectable pastime of finding excuses for what we want. The highest intelligence is displayed by those who are *sāttvika*. Free from all prejudices and attachments, they judge all things in the light of bare truth. Theirs alone is clarity of vision, and they alone can see through the blinding mist of *samsāra* the way to deliverance and bliss.

May I stop here for the present ?

lxxviii

We have to begin our work today with the classification of *dhṛiti*. This term stands for mental determination, the power of the will. The *sāttvikī dhṛiti* is explained in the following *śloka*:

धृत्या यया धारयते मनःप्राणेन्द्रियक्रियाः ।
योगेनाव्यभिचारिण्या धृतिस्सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी ॥ ३३ ॥

33. That will, O Arjuna, is *sāttvika*, by which, unswerving through steady application, the work of the mind, the physiological work of life and the work of the senses are controlled.

You may remember Śrī Kṛishṇa's description of a *sthita-prajña* in some memorable verses in the second chapter. (Vol. I, pp. 142 *et seq.*) The sage of steady wisdom, we were told, must be able to withdraw his senses from the object of the senses in the manner in which the tortoise withdraws its limbs into its shell. You are well aware of what this withdrawal of senses from the so-called external world means. It is in the very nature of our senses to cause the expansion of the sphere of our conscious cognition from within outwards. In consequence of this, our senses project themselves, so to speak, into the outer world and enter into relations with the various perceivable objects found therein. This in turn gives rise to tendencies of desire and aversion, caused respectively by the pleasure and the pain associated with the sensations experienced. Now, unless we control our senses in such a way as to check their tendency to stretch themselves out into the external world in their quest for pleasant sensations, we cannot succeed in obtaining that evenness of mind which has been declared to be synonymous with the practice of *karma-yoga* in the famous phrase, '*Samatvaṃ yoga uchyate*' (II. 48).

If we are to practise the philosophy of conduct taught by Śrī Kṛishṇa, we must acquire the power of controlling our senses in such a manner as to make it impossible for the tendencies of desire and aversion to arise in ourselves, when we perceive external objects and experience the consequential pleasure and pain. To be able to do this, we must have a firm will which will never

quake or quail. Hence it is taught that one of the essential characteristics of the *sāttviki dhṛiti* is its ability to conquer the senses. That it is by no means impossible to conquer our senses in this manner may be shown easily enough Take the case of a vendor of sweets. Like most human beings, he too must have a liking for tasting sweet confections. Nevertheless, he controls this tendency in himself, knowing full well that it is against his own interests in the long run to go on eating the confections which he has prepared for sale. If it is possible for him to control his senses in this way, urged by the overwhelming claims of his self-interest, it is possible for others in the larger interests of the soul to exercise due governance over the wayward senses.

Śrī Kṛishṇa goes on to state that *manaḥ-kriyā* and *prāṇa-kriyā* (mental and vital activities) also can be brought under the control of *dhṛiti*. Consider a specific instance. Suppose you resolve to fast on an *ekādaśī* day. You have never done it before, but some one whom you respect teaches you that the fasting will do you good physically, morally and spiritually. The day dawns, and very soon the hour of breakfast arrives. Food is ready, and if you feel like resiling from your resolution, you can do so at any moment. The physiological urge of hunger demands satisfaction. By the exercise of a strong will, you can, however, succeed in fasting. And this is tantamount to controlling in some measure one of the primal urges of all living organisms. You may have read of the attempts that are being made by certain doctors in America to find out experimentally how long men can live without taking food. Some of you may have heard of a curious custom among the Jains known as *sallekhana*, which unfriendly critics may describe as suicide by starvation. There is a belief amongst them that one can attain *moksha* by starving oneself to death. Apparently they argue that, in starving oneself to death, the supremacy of the spirit over the flesh is so firmly established that, when the end comes, it can only release the soul from the trammels of the flesh. Many Jains are known to have ended their lives in this manner. I do not want you now to pass any judgment over the soundness of this doctrine. The point for you to consider is this. Do not the facts that I have cited furnish ample proof of the power of the will to exercise some measure of control over the physiological activities of life ?

There remains the question of the control of *manaḥkriyā*. I remember to have drawn your attention frequently to the fact that the Sanskrit term, '*manas*', does not correspond to the English word, 'mind'. It is generally understood to stand for that peculiar function of the faculty of attention by means of which the operation of the senses in relation to the external objects are, as it were, reported to the soul. You know very well that it is possible for people to be absent-minded; men belonging to my profession are, in the view of comic journals, notorious for this failing. What do we intend to convey exactly by saying that some person is absent-minded? We mean that he is so absorbed in some train of thought that he is dead to the world around him, that his senses do not report to his soul their reactions to the external world. His eyes may remain open; no physical impediment may obstruct his ears; nevertheless, the eyes do not see and the ears do not hear.

In the language of Sanskrit psychology, this is explained by the statement that, for the time being, the *manas* is not directed to the perception of external objects by these senses. It is not that the light reflected from the various objects around him fails to produce its impression on the retina of his eyes; it is not that the sounds produced in the neighbourhood fail to travel through the air and strike the tympanum of his ears. These things happen in his case as they do in the case of any one sitting near him, who is not absent-minded. Nonetheless, while the man who is not absent-minded sees with his eyes and hears with his ears, the man who is absent-minded or is absorbed in some kind of thought or meditation neither sees nor hears. The difference between the two is stated by Sanskrit thinkers to be due to the fact that, while in the one case, the faculty of attention or *manas* is directed to the perception of external objects by the senses, in the other it is directed towards the thought or meditation in which the man is engaged.

Think of our senses as a sub-post-office. The *manas* will then be something like a central post-office. Now this central office may be engaged in two different sorts of work. It may receive letters from the sub-offices for transmission to their destinations, or it may be transmitting its own messages or letters to their

destinations. In the latter case, it is engaged not so much in receiving as in despatching. If you can overlook the imperfections of this analogy, you will see that it tries to illustrate the peculiar position of the *manas*, in relation to the senses on the one hand and the soul on the other. It is the channel through which the reports of the senses are conveyed to the soul. If the *manas* refuses to carry a message, the soul remains unaware of the experience sought to be reported. The soul becomes aware of the external world, only when the *manas* conveys the messages of the senses to the soul.

If such is the function of the *manas* in psychology, then it is not very difficult for us to see how we can control by our determination the *kriyā* of the *manas* also. If our resolution is such as to encourage us in thought and meditation, then we can make ourselves dead to the external world for the time being. The *manas* can help us in internal concentration or introspection. Suppose there is a young man who is trying to work out a difficult problem in mathematics on his slate. The window of his room opens out to a busy street. Sights and sounds and, perhaps, smells also from the street assault his senses. If he has a strong will, then this assault will not affect him in any way. For the *manas* will not then convey to the soul the report of the senses, and so he will be saved from distraction. It is only when his will is weak that he will have to seek physical protection from this assault by closing the window. It is clear, therefore, that the determination of the will controls the working of our faculty of attention and decides whether it is to be directed externally or internally.

Let us now try to examine the other characteristics of the *sāttvikī dhṛiti* mentioned in this *śloka*. It is required to be unswerving through steady application. It is possible for us to make resolutions again and again, keep them for a time and then break them. This kind of action shows that the will is not being applied steadily. It is further required that the will should not waver. Take, again, the example of the youthful student of mathematics. If he resolves that the colourful scenes in the street should not disturb him till his problem is solved, and sticks to his resolution, then we can say that his *dhṛiti* is *avyabhichāriṇī*. If, however, he contents himself with solving a portion of his problem and then

immerses himself in the study of another subject, say, physiology, then too the mind is not devoid of resolution, but the object of his mental activity has changed. When the object of your attention changes in this manner before the object of your first resolution is fully and finally accomplished, then your *dhṛiti* is *vyabhichāriṇī*. If, therefore, your *dhṛiti* is to deserve the epithet of '*sāttvikī*', it must be directed to the control of the faculty of attention, the physiological activities and aptitudes, and the operations of the senses; this control must be exercised constantly, and its object should not change from moment to moment.

The *sāttvikī dhṛiti* thus defined will help us to acquire the attitude of *samatva* and enable us to get rid of the bondage of *karma* by freeing us from the tendencies of desire and aversion that ordinarily arise in the minds of all when the senses are active. We will now pass on to the consideration of the *rājasī dhṛiti*.

यया तु धर्मकामार्थान् धृत्या धारयतेऽर्जुन ।
प्रसङ्गेन फलाकाङ्क्षी धृतिस्सा पार्थ राजसी ॥ ३४ ॥

34. O, Arjuna, that will is *rājasa* by means of which one who is desirous of fruits, as the occasion may justify, adheres to righteousness, pleasure and wealth.

In Sanskrit literature, they speak of four *purushārthas* or objects for which men struggle and strive. These, as you may be aware, are *dharma* or the observance of righteousness, *artha* or the acquisition of wealth, *kāma* or the gratification of desire, and *moksha* or the emancipation of the soul. Of these, *moksha* is regarded as the *parama-purushārtha*, the supreme object of human pursuit, the *summum bonum* towards which all wise human endeavour should be directed. The first three *purushārthas* are collectively known as *tri-varga*. Hinduism holds that it is perfectly legitimate to strive for these three objectives. But it is necessary that *kāma* and *artha* should be sought for and won only through *dharma*. Duty may be a stern mistress, but she need not make you poor, and your life ugly and drab. It is possible for you to live a life which is perfectly in accordance with righteousness

and at the same time happy and prosperous. Righteous men have lived happily and in affluence, even as unrighteous men; and contrariwise, unrighteous men have suffered from want and poverty even as righteous men. There is no necessary relation between righteousness on the one hand and poverty on the other, nor between sin and riches. The pursuit of *artha* and *kāma* is by no means inconsistent with the practice of *dharma*. Indeed, one of the standard definitions of *dharma* in our philosophical literature declares that *dharma* is that from which results the attainment of prosperity here and salvation hereafter. We have the highest authority, therefore, for stating that the Hindu ideal of duty does not make the attainment of prosperity here incompatible with the attainment of salvation hereafter.

Indeed, the attainment of *artha* and *kāma* through the transgression of *dharma* has its own drawbacks, even from the standpoint of worldly wisdom. Human beings, however wicked and sinful, have some sort of conscience. It is part of their heritage as men. And conscience, as you know, is a difficult thing to kill. It may receive knock-down blows, but it has a knack of reviving at inconvenient moments and upsetting all calculations. That being the case, when wealth is acquired or desire gratified in improper or immoral ways, there is always the danger of our conscience spoiling our enjoyment. Money, whether justly or unjustly earned, can satisfy our desires. But when it is unjustly earned, there may be uneasy stirrings of the conscience within, and our peace of mind may be marred by ugly reminders of our sin, when we would fain forget it. It may even be that a luxurious life bought from the wages of sin will not give us as much joy as a simple but honest life. And none of us can be so sure of having stilled the voice of God within us as to expect to enjoy with impunity and with full satisfaction ill-gotten gains. In this way, the attainment of *artha* and *kāma* through the paths of *dharma* may be seen to give us more certain happiness than their pursuit through proper ways. The *rājasī dhṛiti* will help us to seek wealth and to satisfy our normal and natural desires, consistently with the demands of righteousness.

Please note that, though the *rājasī dhṛiti* will enable us to live a life which is not incompatible with righteousness, it cannot set us on the road to salvation. In consequence, it is inferior to

the *sāttvikī dhṛiti*. By seeking *kāma* and *artha*, paying due heed to the requirements of *dharma*, we are not striving to kill selfishness. When our highest ideal happens to be the attainment of prosperity here through right and proper methods, we do not give up the fruits of our labour. We want to enjoy the legitimate fruits of our work. We may not be greedy, we may not covet the possessions of others, but we feel, when we are at this moral level, that we have a right to the fruits that accrue legitimately from our honest toil. Some of you may be familiar with Śaṅkarāchārya's wise advice: "Gladden your mind with the wealth that you acquire through your labour." (*Yallabhase nijakarmopāttaṃ vittaṃ tena vinodaya chittam.*) The attitude that I have outlined above can be understood to be characteristic of one who has the *rājasī dhṛiti*, only if we interpret the word '*prasaṅga*' occurring in the second line as '*prasakti*'. This interpretation is supported by the fact that its implications are in accord with the pursuit of *artha* and *kāma* through *dharma*, which is declared in the first line to be the essential characteristic of the *rājasī dhṛiti*. The term, '*prasaṅga*,' has also been understood in the sense of *saṅga*, of attachment, of over-much attachment. There is no insuperable objection to this interpretation also, and you may choose whichever meaning you prefer.

यया स्वप्नं भयं शोकं विषादं मदमेव च ।
न विमुञ्चति दुर्मेधा धृतिस्सा पार्थ तामसी ॥ ३५ ॥

35. That will, O Arjuna, by which one of perverse mind is unable to give up sleep, fear, grief, despondency and folly, is *tāmasa*.

'*Tāmasī dhṛiti*' is possible both in the case of the man of perverse intelligence and the man of no intelligence. Such men are unable to give up the tendency to sleep too much. Determination and practice, as you are aware, can make it possible for us to control sleep. Some people lay their heads on the pillow with a resolution to wake up at a particular hour in the morning, and they do get up at the correct hour without the aid of any alarm-clocks. Napoleon is reputed to have possessed the faculty of going to sleep and waking up whenever he wanted. There are also a fairly large body of men who have to work during the dead

hours of the night, when the rest of the world is sleeping soundly—night-watchmen, for instance, and drivers of steam locomotives. They carry out their work without feeling any great difficulty. But if the will is weak, then we succumb to the overpowering influence of sleep.

Bhaya is fear. The man of *tāmasī dhṛiti* is not endowed with courage. He is ever subject to the benumbing influence of fear. As you are aware, it is the presence of *rāga* and *dvesha* that gives rise to fear. If you have such equanimity of mind as not to be subject to the pleasures and pains that almost invariably accompany your experiences, and if you do not care to have more and more of pleasant experiences and less and less of painful experiences, how can fear affect you? Fear is nothing but the expectation of a possible disappointment. Suppose you are a trader. You have stocked in goods with the hope of selling them at a huge profit. You learn then that there is a good chance of the market being upset. You are at once in the grip of fear. The prospect of a loss makes you afraid. What is this fear due to? Surely, to your *rāga* in relation to the profits that you have reckoned upon. If there had been no such *rāga*, the possibility of the market being upset will not worry you. Suppose now that this apprehended loss actually occurs and that the market goes against you through a rival dumping his goods. Your attitude towards your successful rival would be one of *krodha* or anger. Fear, attachment and anger are related in this way.

Now, fear arises when disappointment looms at a distance. When the disappointment actually arrives, we have sorrow. We bemoan our loss. The grief may be a passing emotion, or if sufficiently severe, it may grow into despondency and unnerve us for all time. When our mental equilibrium is lost in this manner, there is *vishāda*. Any of these emotions may make us insane for the time being. There is the madness of desire, the madness of anger, the madness of grief and the madness of despair. This may well be the meaning of '*mada*'. It has also been understood as sensual appetite.

Consider a man whose resolution is too weak to enable him to control his tendency to sleep, to fear, to sorrow, to despair and to become mad under the influence of anger, fear or sorrow.

Think of a man so readily incited or so strongly emotional as to be the prey of every passing emotion. His intellectual power and vigour of will are so weak as to place him entirely at the mercy of his emotions. He becomes the slave of his passions. His will is absolutely impotent and cannot give him moral strength or the capacity to advance spiritually. Such is the *tāmasī dhṛiti*.

To sum up Śrī Kṛishṇa's teaching on the classification of *dhṛiti*. The *sāttvikī dhṛitī* is such as will help one to kill selfishness and facilitate the attainment of *moksha*. The *rājasī dhṛiti* will enable a man to live an honourable and worthy life, perfectly in accordance with righteousness. That *dhṛiti* which is too impotent to be helpful in either of these ways is *tāmasī*. According as our determination is *sāttvika*, *rājasa* or *tāmasa*, our endeavour in life will be directed towards the attainment of *moksha*, or of the pleasures of life consistently with the practice of righteousness, or of abject slavery to the senses. Whatever one's object in life may be, it is necessary that one should possess some sort of *dhṛiti* or the power of controlling the natural tendencies of *rāga* and *dvesha*. You may control them to such an extent as to kill selfishness altogether and thus fit yourself for the salvation of *moksha*. Or you may exercise your control at least to the extent of making your quest after wealth and the gratification of desire consistent with the practice of virtue. From the level of this *dhṛiti*, you may rise to that level of the *sāttvikī dhṛiti*, if not in this life, at least in the course of the next reincarnation. If your will falls below the strength demanded of the *rājasī dhṛiti*, if your determination is so feeble as to make you always the slave of your passions, tossed hither and thither by passing gusts of emotion, then it is very difficult for your life to progress at all. Your *dhṛiti* is then of the worst possible type ; it is *tāmasī*.

The first thing that we have to note about the scheme of life propounded by Śrī Kṛishṇa is that we have to take care of our *dhṛiti*, our mental determination. Once that is done, we are assured of success in the end. If you think your will power is weak, try again and again. *Yoga* is the means of success. If you endeavour long enough and on a sufficient number of occasions, you will find that your will is growing in strength of its own accord, that you have acquired a power that you never had before.

Each time you make your attempt, although you may fail for the time being, the vigour of your will is increased. Failures ought not to deter us. They must become the stepping-stones to success. We must have the faith that human nature is so constituted that through practice even the weakest may acquire strength. Nothing but blank despair will stare us in the face, if we hold that the weak will have to remain weak for all time and that there is always the possibility of retrogression and never of progress. Śrī Kṛishṇa does not preach this cheerless and benumbing doctrine. He gives us a heartening message of hope and shows the path of deliverance even to the weakest and the worst amongst us. The man of *tāmasī dhṛiti*, by assiduous practice, may rise to the level of the *rājasi dhṛiti*, and further application will enable him in the end to reach the heights of the *sāttvikī dhṛiti*. When he can maintain this level steadily and continuously, the attainment of the goal of *moksha* is certain and assured.

With your permission, I will conclude here our work for the day.

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Last time we tried to understand the classification of *dhṛiti* or the mental resolution with which men engage themselves in various activities and do their duties well or ill, as the case may be. This *dhṛiti*, we saw, is all important in regard to the direction of the activities of men and the manner in which they are done. According as men will, so do they work. The *sāttvikī dhṛiti* helps one to lead the *sāttvika* life, and so too the *rājasī* or *tāmasī dhṛiti* helps men to lead lives which are *rājasa* or *tāmasa*. Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to consider the various kinds of pleasures that men may attain by working with different motives and in different ways. Pleasure or happiness of some kind or the avoidance of some pain—this is almost always the goal of our activities. Having considered the motives and methods of work and agent, Śrī Kṛishṇa very naturally turns to the consideration of the results of work.

सुखं त्विदानीं त्रिविधं शृणु मे भरतर्षभ ।
अभ्यासाद्रमते यत्र दुःखान्तं च निगच्छति ॥ ३६ ॥

यत्तदग्रे विषमिव परिणामेऽमृतोपमम् ।
तत्सुखं सात्त्विकं प्रोक्तमात्मबुद्धिप्रसादजम् ३७ ॥

36-37. Now, hear from Me, O Arjuna, about the threefold (classification of) pleasure. That pleasure is said to be *sāttvika,* in which one comes to enjoy through practice and in which one reaches the end of pain, which is like poison at the beginning but like nectar at the end, and which gives rise to clear knowledge of the soul.

All the pleasures that we know of have the unfortunate knack of satiating us after a time. No pleasure but cloys through frequent experience. It is a case of familiarity breeding, not merely contempt, but repulsion also. Think of those, for instance, who are constantly moving near the Taj Mahal. What effect will this dream dreamt in marble, this undying monument to a deathless love, have on them? Very probably, they may not see the superb beauty of the Taj. Looking on it every day may dull the keen edge of their sensitiveness to its charm. A true artist, perhaps, may thrill with wonder every time he sees that splendid mausoleum; but for most of us, 'custom' may 'stale' its loveliness. Consider as another example our liking for any kind of food, say, sweets. We may be eager for them, we may eat a certain amount of them with enjoyment and relish, but there is always a point of satiation which puts an end to our enjoyment. In the case of most pleasures that fall within the range of common experience, it may be thus observed that they tend to lose their power to please by repetition. Here in this verse, certain exceptional pleasures are indicated, which possess the remarkable characteristic of improving on acquaintance.

The *sāttvika* pleasures, we are told, are such that we learn to enjoy them by frequently experiencing them. How this can be, we will learn presently. Yet another fact of experience is that no

pleasure is free from some kind of admixture with pain. "Our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught." And while there is this undercurrent of sorrow in all our experience of pleasure, it is also to be noted that pleasure is evanescent by nature and is almost invariably succeeded by pain. The *sāttvika* pleasures are, however, pure and unalloyed and do not lead to pain. In their experience, we reach the end of pain. Of ordinary pleasures, again, it may be noted that they are attractive at the beginning and repulsive at the end. Sugar is sweet as nectar at first, but when the tongue is satiated, there is nausea. Eating what we like up to the point of satiation, we will be fortunate to escape with a light doctor's bill. But the distinctive characteristic of the *sāttvika* pleasures is that they repel at first, but are attractive in the end.

You may ask whether there is anything in our ordinary experience, which illustrates this. Take, for example, a young man who has acquired culture after going through a course of education.. He is in a position to enjoy the pleasures which the study of poetry or of art or of philosophy can give rise to. Now in order to acquire this power, it was necessary that he should undergo a course of study. He had to submit himself to the discipline imposed by his teachers in school and college, and by his parents at home. During this period of training, he must have felt the discipline unpleasant, to say the least. But in the end, when he blossoms out as a man of culture, he has acquired the capacity to enjoy certain superior kinds of pleasures which others who have not had this training, cannot enjoy. If he now looks back upon those days, when he was forced to go through a disagreeable discipline, he is certain to feel grateful and friendly towards those who directed him through it. You will observe from this example that initial pain and final enjoyment are possible in relation to certain kinds of pleasure. Take the *yogin* as another instance. Śrī Kṛishṇa has told us that few can succeed in the practice of *yoga*. The discipline, as we well know, is rigorous and exacting. But when one has successfully braved the ordeal and experienced the unique bliss of self-realisation or God-realisation, one will have no hard thoughts left for the training that gave one the power to realise that experience.

Lastly, it is declared that the *sāttvika* pleasures give rise to a clear knowledge of the nature of the *ātman*. That is, they help us in achieving self-realisation. The seat of these pleasures is not in the senses. They are akin to the soul and belong to its realm. To the man who is a slave to the pleasures of the senses, the idea that there is such a thing as the soul is not likely to occur. In fact, the body is the one and only reality for him. The end and aim of his life consist in enjoying the pleasures of the body. He never realises that the purposes of the soul are higher than those of the body, and that the body, indeed, is nothing more than an instrument for the soul to realise its ends. Even when the pursuit of the pleasures of the body results in pain and disappointment, wisdom never dawns on him. Some, however, who start in life after this fashion learn from experience. Realising that life is not all sugar and sweetness, that the bitters follow the sweets, they change their plan of life and strain their eyes to catch a glimpse of the true destiny of the soul. The point to be noted is that the pleasures of the senses do not awaken them to this. So long as they last, the pleasures of the senses deaden our sensitiveness to the demands of the soul. They do not spring from, nor can co-exist with, nor result in any clear knowledge of the soul.

Think now of the pleasures of the mind. One who can enjoy these pleasures must have been specially trained. No one can acquire this power without undergoing a strenuous discipline. This presupposes some sort of control over the senses. It does not matter in the least whether this control is exercised voluntarily or through external pressure, so long as it is recognised that the power to enjoy these pleasures is won as a result of the exercise of self-control. To have gone through such a discipline indicates that during the course of the discipline, the mind has learnt to see the truth of things. The enjoyment of the higher pleasures is thus not inconsistent with an enhanced appreciation of the truth of things. The pleasures of the senses, however, are apt to cloud the intellect. They unbalance the mind and make reason the slave of desire. We may note in passing that some commentators have understood the purport of the expression, '*ātma-buddhi-prasāda-jam*', to be that the *sāttvika* pleasures spring from a clear knowledge of the soul. This is, of course, obvious. Without realising the nature of the soul, it is not possible for us even to cognise the existence of these pleasures.

विषयेन्द्रियसंयोगाद्यत्तदग्रेऽमृतोपमम् ।
परिणामे विषमिव तत्सुखं राजसं स्मृतम् ॥ ३८ ॥

38. That pleasure is spoken of as *rājasa*, which (springs) from the union of the perceivable objects with the perceiving senses, which is comparable to nectar at the beginning, but is like poison at the end.

In understanding this verse, we have to bear in mind that the *sāttvika* pleasures are not apparently conceived to be the result of the contact of the senses with their objects. I spoke of them, you will remember, as pleasures of the mind, and as being kin with the soul and belonging to its realm. Here we are told that the *rājasa* pleasures are produced from the contact of the senses with their objects. Here, too, it is of course the mind which experiences, but it is not altogether responsible for these pleasures. They are not completely dependent on the mind for their existence. They may be conceived to arise somewhat in the following manner. We start with the senses which are in us, and the objects to be perceived by these senses, which are outside of us. There is a relation established between the perceiving senses and the outer objects to be perceived by them, and this relation of contact, as we may say, is responsible for the production of the experience of pleasure. Consider the pleasure that we feel by tasting the sweetness of sugar. The sugar is an object to be perceived by our senses, it is outside of us. It has to be brought into contact with the palate before the sensation of sweetness and the consequent pleasure are experienced. Let us now look at the pleasure derived by the *yogin* in the state of contemplation or *samādhi*. There is nothing outside of him which is needed to give him this unique bliss. The pleasure, so to speak, rises from some deep fountain within him.

So we may say that the more completely the pleasure that one enjoys is of an intellectual or spiritual nature, the less is it dependent on external objects, and conversely the more the pleasure is dependent on external objects, the less is it intellectual or spiritual. And the nature of these pleasures which spring from the contact of the perceiving senses with the perceivable objects

and for which most of us struggle and strive, is that they are enjoyable in the beginning, but repulsive in their culmination.

यदग्रे चानुबन्धे च सुखं मोहनमात्मनः ।
निद्रालस्यप्रमादोत्थं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥ ३९ ॥

39. That pleasure, which at first and in its consequences deludes the soul, and which springs out of sleep, sloth and excitement, is said to be *tāmasa.*

To the *tāmasa* category belong the pleasures that delude the soul. They have not even the saving grace of the *rājasa* pleasures which by the pain that they give in the end may incite wisdom. It is not easy to prick the bubble of their self-conceit and show them up in their true colours. They spring from sleep, idleness and excitement. To Kumbhakarṇa, nothing was so attractive as sleep. There are men in our midst today, who kill their time by sleeping as long as they can. There are men again who laze and idle away, when there is work demanding to be done. They prefer to live in the land of lotus-eaters, dreaming, idling and sleeping. *Pramāda* is some kind of excitement which leads you to forget yourself, the excitement of anger, envy or intoxication, for instance. The term, '*pramāda*', may also be understood as indifference or heedlessness. Very naturally, if you are inattentive and indifferent, you cannot acquire true knowledge, and the knowledge that you acquire may be so defective as to delude you.

Having classified work and the related mental dispositions under the three heads of *sāttvika, rājasa* and *tāmasa*, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to teach that this threefold classification is universally applicable. There is nothing in the universe, He declares, which cannot be brought under one or other of these categories, nothing of the nature of a physical object or of human experience, whether sensual, intellectual or moral.

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः ।
सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मुक्तं यदेभिस्स्यात्त्रिभिर्गुणैः ॥ ४० ॥

40. There is no entity here on earth, nor among the gods in heaven, which is free from these three *guṇas* born of *prakṛiti.*

Wherever there is *prakṛiti*, there naturally we have the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. It is conceived that even in the world of the gods, *prakṛiti* is present. Even the gods are believed to possess bodies made up of *prakṛiti*. The Lord alone is free from compulsory association with *prakṛiti* and in actual fact exercises dominion over it. When embodiments, animal, human and divine, are in this manner made up of *prakṛiti*, they are subject to the influence of the three *guṇas*. In relation to all these entities, all the three *guṇas* are exercising their influence. But in different circumstances different *guṇas* will exercise a predominant influence. Now we all know that different effects flow from the preponderance of different *guṇas*. When *sattva* is dominant, we have certain results; when *rajas* is potent, we have certain other results; and when *tamas* is pre-eminent, we have still other results. We, therefore, associate characteristic effects with the preponderance of each of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, and say that such and such an entity is *sāttvika*, *rājasa* or *tāmasa*, according to the characteristics it manifests. Since the whole universe has *prakṛiti* for one of its essential constituents, the threefold classification according to the nature of the *guṇas* must be universally applicable.

We have also learnt that the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* represent not merely states or aspects of *prakṛiti* but stand for distinctive moral attributes. (Chapter XIV). Accordingly, mental and moral characteristics have been classified under the three heads of *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*. When our physical constitution is under the dominant influence of one of the *guṇas*, our mental and moral characteristics will be those associated with that *guṇa*. Now, it has also been laid down that our endeavours in life should be directed to raise ourselves from whatever position we may be into that condition in which the *sattva-guṇa* dominates. The direction of progress is from the preponderance of *tamas* to that of *sattva*. Those that are established in *sattva*, as you learnt, go up, while those who are under the influence of *tamas* fall down. Those who are influenced by *rajas* are entangled in a monotonous orbit and tend to remain at the same level for all time. (XIV. 18.) We have been advised to cultivate *sāttvika* characteristics and to overcome the tendencies associated with the other two *guṇas*. We must use our will to struggle against our inborn tendencies. If there is a tendency in us which makes for sleep or idleness, we

must try to overcome it. Every effort that we make in the right direction increases the power of our will and adds a brick, so to say, to the edifice of our final achievement. The more we try, the more likely are we to succeed. Even failures help us in the long run. We may rise to higher things through a stairway, every step of which is an attempt that failed. Everyone is free to make the attempt at any time, and if he persists long enough, is sure to succeed.

This raises immediately a question of some importance. Men are born with varying attributes and qualities. Some, for instance, may take delight in sleep, while others may be tremendously active and energetic. Different *guṇas* predominate in different people, and distinguish them from one another. Now, knowing that every one of them is bound to improve if he only makes the effort in the right direction, are we to hold that they should all follow the same plan in life? Is there only one mental and moral prescription for all?

Śrī Kṛishṇa has already answered this question in the negative in another context, and presently refers to it again. The prescription applicable to the moral disease of one man may not cure the moral disease of another. Doctors tell us that all fevers cannot be treated in the same way, nor can the same fever in different patients be treated in exactly the same way. Fevers are of different kinds, and the same fever may produce varying effects in different people. The treatment must differ according to the nature of the disease and the nature of the patient. Even so, the moral diseases of men have to be treated with particular reference to the nature of the disease and the nature of the patient. Accordingly, Śrī Krishṇa teaches that every one will have to live the life for which he is most fitted, and that in living that life he can progress in such a manner as to reach the goal of all human endeavour. If only we do our allotted duties in life, giving up our ingrained selfishness and all sense of agency and ownership in the firm faith that God is the agent of all our acts and the source of all power and energy, we will render true worship to God and attain Him in the end, whatever our station in life. The question is briefly dealt with in the verses following.

ब्राह्मणक्षत्रियविशां शूद्राणां च परन्तप ।
कर्माणि प्रविभक्तानि स्वभावप्रभवैर्गुणैः ॥ ४१ ॥

41. The functions of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas, and of Śūdras also, O Arjuna, are divided in accordance with their inborn qualities.

Every society requires that a number of functions have to be carried out by its members. It is not very difficult to arrive at the qualifications required of those who have to perform such functions. This idea is by no means unfamiliar to the history of European philosophy. Plato in his *Republic* drew a picture of an ideal society, arguing from a purely abstract standpoint. There, too, he arrives at a classification of functions and of the qualities of persons fitted to perform those functions. Plato gives us the philosopher, the soldier and the labourer, and we in this country have also been taught something not far dissimilar. We need the philosopher, the statesman and the soldier, and we want also the trader and the labourer. The philosopher is required for the moral progress of society and the statesman for carrying on its corporate activities. The soldier sees that order is maintained and that the policy of the statesman is carried out. The labourer supplies the material needs of society, and the trader helps in the distribution of commodities and the maintenance of contacts with other civilisations. Plato, however, believed in slaves. To him slavery was a necessary institution, and he delegated to the slaves the production of goods and all the labour needed for the well-being of society. The freemen, consisting of the philosophers, the statesmen and the soldiers, were to live on the sweated labour of the slaves. In the fourfold classification of society mentioned here, no such differentiation between slave and freeman is made. The labourers form part of the four classes into which every society may be divided and by implication are considered equally honourable citizens with the others.

It is definitely stated here that the functions of the various classes in society have been distributed among them in accordance with their subservience to different *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. There is no reason for doubt in regard to Śrī Kṛishṇa's views on the caste

system. He does not hold, as I see it, that birth alone determines caste. The natural tendencies of men have also to be taken note of. A man born of Brahmin parents may not be a Brahmin. It is not that heredity is a negligible factor in determining our endowment. The transmission of physical, mental and moral tendencies and characteristics by parents to their offspring is a factor which we cannot afford to ignore. But it is not an invariable factor. There is no law of the Medes and the Persians laying down that as are the parents, so shall the child be always and without exception. Heredity notwithstanding, children whom we can by no means regard as Brahminical may be born to Brahmin parents, and Brahminical children may be born to Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas or Śūdras. It is one's qualities that determine whether one is a Brahmin, or Kshatriya, or Vaiśya, or Śūdra. And each man by performing well that function for which his nature, temperament and qualifications fit him, will attain the highest. These things will become clearer in the course of our study of the verses that follow, consideration of which I propose to postpone to our next class.

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We were considering last week the question of the apportionment of various functions in society to different classes in accordance with their natural qualifications and endowments. This is not the first time that this question is dealt with in the *Gītā*. You will remember Śrī Kṛishṇa's statement in the fourth chapter that the system of four castes was created by Him in accordance with the divisions of 'qualities' and works (IV. 13). Śrī Kṛishṇa refers to the topic again for the purpose of summing up His teachings thereon. We have been taught in this chapter so far from various standpoints that we have to discharge our duties dispassionately and in a dedicated spirit. It is natural to ask: How are we to learn what our duties are? Śrī Kṛishṇa's answer to this question may be found in the verses that we have to do to-day.

शमो दमस्तपः शौचं क्षान्तिरार्जवमेव च ।
ज्ञानं विज्ञानमास्तिक्यं ब्राह्मं कर्म स्वभावजम् ॥ ४२ ॥

42. Tranquillity, self-control, austerity, purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness, wisdom, insight and faith in God—this is the function of the Brahmin, as determined by this own nature.

S'ama is tranquillity of spirit, such as makes it impossible for one to become excited or perturbed by anything that may take place. It does not mean a deadened sensibility, but indicates the calm of spirit which rises victorious over our tendency to get elated at success and depressed at failure. *Dama* is self-control, the power to overcome temptations. *S'aucha* is physical as well as mental purity. Cleanliness of the body alone is not referred to, though this is undoubtedly included in the significance of the term. Primarily, the reference is to freedom of the mind from polluting thoughts. It is always possible to live a life which makes a show of purity externally, but is rotten to the core within. Judged from without, a man may be altogether flawless, but when you come to be closely associated with him and understand the tendency of his thoughts, you may find that these thoughts are not half so pure as his correct external life led you to think.

Kshānti is forgiveness. No one who is actuated by selfishness and is full of *rāga* and *dvesha*, can be free from anger; and remaining under the sway of anger, one cannot be ready to forgive. It is only when we learn to meet disappointments bravely and banish hate and anger from our thoughts that we can forgive. *Ārjava* is straightforwardness, springing from complete harmony between the inner thought and the outer act. *Jñāna* is the wisdom that guides us in our quest after the supreme good. *Vijñāna* may mean insight into the truth of things, or it may stand for specialised knowledge of arts and sciences. Wisdom and learning may lead us as easily to the Everlasting Nay as to the Everlasting Aye. So, over and above all these and transfiguring them all, we must have faith in God.

These qualities determine the Brahminical life. You will please note that Śrī Kṛishṇa does not say that these qualities

appertain only to those who are of Brahminical parentage. The *Gītā* does not appear to me to uphold caste by birth. The natural meaning of the stanza seems to be that whoever possesses these qualifications is fit to lead the Brahminical life, whether born of Brahminical parents or not.

शौर्यं तेजो धृतिर्दाक्ष्यं युद्धे चाप्यपलायनम् ।
दानमीश्वरभावश्च क्षात्रं कर्म स्वभावजम् ॥ ४३ ॥

43. Valour, heroism, courage, cleverness, dauntlessness in battle, generosity, masterfulness—this is the function of the Kshatriya, as determined by his own nature.

Śaurya is valour. *Tejas* is the inborn power of genius, the power which overcomes all opposition, the quality which men like Alexander, Cæsar and Napoleon had. We have understood the term, '*dhṛiti*', in the sense of will-power, but it seems as though the word was used in the slightly different sense of courage here. *Dākshya* is skill in carrying out one's work, resourcefulness. Napoleon had both *tejas* and *dākshya*. They say that he introduced new features in military strategy. He was so original in his tactics that he almost always took his enemies by surprise and inflicted on them crushing defeats, even when his forces numbered less than half or a third of those ranged against him. Flight from battle is one of the most heinous crimes for a soldier, and you are all probably aware of the fact that even to-day military authorities consider desertion from the battle-field a capital offence. The least that can be required of the soldier is that he should not run away from his post of duty. Only those should become soldiers who are confident that when the hour of struggle arrives, they will not be panic-stricken, and make a disgraceful exhibition of themselves.

Īśvara-bhāva is mastership, the power and capacity to lead and to rule. We often hear of prominent statesmen and publicists being described as born leaders of men. Such persons must possess *īśvara-bhāva*. It is not every one who is fit to rule. Some persons placed in positions of authority are too soft and easy-going with the result that discipline is slackened and the whole administrative machinery entrusted to their care becomes lax and

loose-jointed. A few, however, have the knack of running the machinery like clock-work. Every one working under such a master will be feeling that the master's eyes are always upon him. This power to lead men and to exercise control over them is one of the essential characteristics of the Kshatriya. The power to rule, however, may be exercised selfishly and may degenerate into tyranny. A gifted and masterful man placed in a position of authority may cause more harm to society by his selfishness than an average citizen. It is, therefore, required of rulers of men that they should be generous.

कृषिगोरक्ष्यवाणिज्यं वैश्यं कर्म स्वभावजम् ।
परिचर्यात्मकं कर्म शूद्रस्यापि स्वभावजम् ॥ ४४ ॥

44. Agriculture, cattle-breeding and commerce constitute the function of the Vaiśya, as determined by his own nature. And the function of the Śūdra, as determined by his own nature, is essentially one of service.

Though here only the functions of the Vaiśya and the Śūdra are given instead of their qualifications, we must not forget that here too it is the qualification that determines the function. Those who are qualified for undertaking these functions are expected to undertake them and are styled Śūdras or Vaiśyas in consequence. You must bear in mind that the temperament and qualities of anv one are determined by the *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* dominant in his case. The nature of men may be *sāttvika*, *rājasa* or *tāmasa*, and according to the nature of the *guṇa* which is dominant, their fitness for performing particular kinds of work is seen to vary. The man who is predominantly under the influence of the *sattva-guṇa*, for instance, cannot perform the work which naturally appertains to the man of the *rājasa* temperament. The division of society into four castes is based on the differentiation of functions arising from the variety of qualifications and tendencies. It is not a division based primarily on birth. Heredity of course is a factor which we have to take into consideration. There is every likelihood of children inheriting the qualities of their parents. None the less, it would be unwise to ignore instances of children being born strikingly different from their parents.

In regard to the division of society into castes, the ruling factor is the natural fitness of the component members thereof to perform the various functions that are required for its well-being. The function in life of any one is determined by his natural temperament and endowment, whether these are derived from heredity or otherwise; and from one's function, one's duties are determined. Any other arrangement would be harmful and injurious both to society and its members. Consider the case, for instance, of one who is fitted to live a *sāttvika* life, but who is forced to lead a *rājasa* life. Apart from the fact that the man would not be happy in his work and would not be able to develop his own aptitudes, we have to note that such maldistribution of functions is bad economy for society. It is true that we have been taught that none of us have any rights to the fruits of our work. Śrī Kṛishṇa, however, seems to recognise in some measure the title of society to the results of our labour. If the rule of fitness is neglected, the quality of the work that men turn out will become poor, and society as a whole will cease to be efficient and progressive. That is why Śrī Kṛishṇa insists repeatedly that our duties in life are determined by our fitness and aptitude.

It may be asked whether one may not improve one's self by education or otherwise. That is certainly possible. All moral teaching rests on the possibility of men becoming better and better. Nevertheless, we have to remember that it is not an easy thing to alter one's personality and acquire a new temperament. It may even be that the change from one temperament to another can be effected only through a series of births. What is, therefore, essential for us to observe as practical sociologists is not the method of moulding men to the likeness of some ideal pattern that we may admire, but to take them as they are and show them a way to deliverance and peace. That, indeed, is the purpose of Śrī Kṛishṇa's teaching. The royal road to salvation is open to all, irrespective of class or caste, rank or station. Society requires all kinds of work, and it is foolish to make distinctions of high and low among the different kinds of work that have to be done. Every kind of work is worthy and honourable, and every one, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to teach in the next *śloka*, whatever his position in life and whatever the kind of function that he is discharging, can hope to attain unto the Supreme.

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।
स्वकर्मनिरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु ॥ ४५ ॥

45. Man attains beatitude by each being devoted to his own work. Hear now how he who is devoted to his work reaches success.

Social organisation requires that different kinds of work should be performed by different individuals. And since there has to be direction and control, certain positions in society are made subordinate to others. Obedience, as the poet says, is the bond of rule. And because in life the servant is assigned a position which is inferior to that of his master, we must not consider that the work of service rendered by the servant in his position is inferior to the work of mastery rendered by the master in his position. We are apt to consider the work of the servant less important. It is, however, wrong to hold that the work which the servant does as servant is in any way inferior to that which the master does as master. This is a difficult lesson to learn, for we are all prone to confound the position of the worker with the value of his work. Śrī Kṛishṇa takes good care to guard us against this mistake. If you are fit only for the work of the servant and for no other, by all means do that and nothing more. Do not feel that the work is inferior or without value. Each man by being devoted to the work that specially appertains to him in virtue of his natural qualifications can attain salvation. The term, '*samsiddhi*', means perfection of accomplishment, the attainment of final release. You can win *moksha* by doing your work in life in the right manner. It does not matter in the least what the nature of your work is. The *sine qua non* for the attainment of *samsiddhi* is that you should do the work for which you are qualified, unselfishly and well.

We may look at the question also from the standpoint of the law of equality which Sri Kṛishṇa has been asking us to adopt. If all souls are essentially similar to one another, and if the differences among men are derived only from the nature of their embodiments, there is little justification for perpetuating the distinctions that encourage selfishness. The nature and quality of our work, it

is true, are determined by the *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* dominant in us. None the less, we are not entitled to say that the work turned out by one man is inferior or superior to that of another. Every worker is great in his own place. Take a watch. It consists of a number of parts. There are the minute, the hour and the second hands, there is the main-spring, and there are numerous wheels, big and small. Can you say that the work of any of these parts is inferior or superior to that of any other part? Obviously, you cannot. If the watch is to work properly, every part must do its job. You may look upon human society as a well-ordered mechanism which is intended to serve a definite purpose. You may call this purpose the moral and spiritual elevation of the race, or if you prefer the language of the Sāṅkhya philosophy, you may say that the process of evolution going on in Nature is intended to culminate in the emancipation of the spirit. As the function of the watch is to indicate time, even so the function of human society is to liberate the soul from the trammels of the flesh.

If the mechanism of human society is to serve this end well, there should be co-ordination among its parts. And this co-ordination may require the subordination of some individuals to others, but the subordination must not be understood to imply that the work done by the subordinate person is inferior in value or less needed for the fulfilment of the aim of society. Every kind of work is necessary, if the machinery of society is to run well. The false notion that the work of the Brahmin or of the Kshatriya is more important or more valuable than that of the Vaiśya or of the Śūdra will not stand a moment's examination. Before the Brahmin can meditate and teach and the Kshatriya rule and govern, they have to eat and live. And for this they have to depend on the Vaiśya and the Śūdra who plough the land and grow the corn. Judging the various kinds of work required for society by themselves, you cannot say that one kind of work is superior or inferior to another.

All workers have to co-operate and co-ordinate, if society is to remain healthy, prosperous and progressive. And for this purpose, the component members of society will have to enter into relations with one another, and it so happens that the adjustments of individual relations require that some should be masters and that others should be servants. But we must always take care not to confound

the value of the work with the status of the worker. If you ask whether the work of service can give one the same kind of *samsiddhi* as the work of *tapas* or of *dāna*, the answer is : "Yes". According to Śrī Kṛishṇa, every one can attain *samsiddhi* by doing well and in a dedicated spirit the work for which one is qualified. Those who consider that *moksha* can be won only through *jñāna* think that the performance of one's duties in the manner indicated here will lead one to the knowledge that alone can secure salvation.

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥ ४६ ॥

46. Man attains perfection by worshipping through the due discharge of his duty Him from whom is the evolution of all beings and by whom all this is pervaded.

In this *śloka*, Śrī Kṛishṇa explains what He means by stating that men can attain salvation by being devoted to their work. Devotion to duty means nothing less than the belief that one is worshipping God by discharging one's duty. Faith in God is also bound to promote the proper spirit in which one's duties ought to be discharged. You may remember the beautiful simile which looks upon God as penetrating into and supporting the universe in the manner in which the thread of a necklace supports the gems which are strung on it. You are also aware of the manner in which the existence of God as immanent in this way and yet transcendent withal, has been established. As in the case of the soul, there is a double proof adduced in support of the existence of God. It may be remembered that the existence of the soul was shown to rest on a psychological analysis of the mind as well as the experience of the *yogin*. In like manner, the existence of God was established by a philosophical analysis of the phenomena which we collectively describe as Nature, and also by the experience of God-realisation. The method of philosophical analysis is not fully conclusive. Reason has been pressed as easily into the service of atheism as into that of theism. That is why the *Gītā* tells us that Nature may act either as a veil, screening God from our vision, or as a luminous guide, revealing the God within. Nature lifts her veil

from the holy of holies only to a select few. In any case, this proof is a purely inferential one. But the reality of the existence of God is realised directly in personal experience by those who are privileged to progress beyond the experience of self-realisation and attain the summit of God-realisation.

What do these proofs tell us about God? They show Him as the source of all beings and as pervading the entire universe in such a manner that every action in the universe is motivated by His power and energy. When we learn and feel that we are all from Him and that our power to do and dare comes from Him, where is there any reason for making much of distinctions among us? The man who ploughs the ground and sows the corn is as much a child of God as the man who meditates and teaches or the man who rules from the throne. We all hail from the same source and are as children of the same father. There is nothing which we can call our own in all this wide universe, because everything is from Him. The different beings in the universe accomplish what they do achieve, not through any independent power of their own, but through the grace of God. In regard to all kinds of work, whether the world looks upon them as high or low, whether it is Brahminical or Kashatriya work, or the work of the Vaiśya or the Śūdra, whatever work men and women in society may perform, they work through the power that they obtain from the source of their existence. Thus unselfishness in the performance of work becomes a matter of necessity. Any kind of work, high or low, pleasant or unpleasant, when done unselfishly, is bound to lead us to *samsiddhi*.

It may be stated that if you do not worship God by doing the work that falls to your lot in virtue of your natural qualifications, unselfishly and well, you are finding fault with God. It may be that He has not endowed you with the qualities of a soldier or a master, but has dowered you in ample measure with the capacity for service. Suppose you endeavour to live, not the life of service for which you are fitted, but the life of a master out of a selfish longing for the exercise of power; then you must be considered as raising the banner of revolt against God. It would be like a small wheel in a watch finding fault with the watchmaker for making it small. If the small wheel feels envious of the large wheel and tries

to take its place, the result will be the ruin of the mechanism of the watch. Each wheel has a definite function to serve, and is qualified only for serving it. It will be a pronounced misfit doing any other kind of work than the one for which it is intended. The position will become clear, if we consider certain functions which we all recognise as appertaining specially to certain individuals. It is admitted on all hands that all men cannot write poetry, for instance, or paint pictures. Even the law recognises that some kinds of contract like painting portraits cannot be discharged except by the persons that contracted to perform them. Here are certain functions which fall to one's lot through natural endowment. There are also instances of functions which require technical training. Almost all kinds of mechanical and professional work require technical knowledge and experience. Only men possessing certain definite qualifications can be allowed to carry them out.

Suppose we apply universally the principle recognised here. Think of the whole society as a huge organism. Every part of it is allotted a definite function in virtue of its fitness for discharging that function. For the well-being of the part and the welfare of the whole, each part must discharge its specified function efficiently. Every member of society is born to fulfil certain functions and discharge certain duties. By performing in a dedicated spirit the duties that have fallen to one's lot, one may hope to attain the salvation of *moksha*. It does not matter in the least what that work is. The philosopher who meditates on the riddle of existence and flowers out as the moral guide of mankind ; the soldier who protects society both from civil disorder and external aggression ; the Vaiśya who distributes commodities by his commercial activities ; the Śūdra who by his labour makes the soil yield the rich fruit of harvest—all serve God equally well by the due fulfilment of their several duties.

Now, please observe that nothing that I have said should make you understand that either in India or elsewhere society is at present run along these lines, that every one in the world today is allotted his proper function and place in life. There may be ample room for reform and reorganisation of society, but the statement made here is generally applicable. The way to salvation lies through the due performance of the duties that fall to one's lot

through one's qualifications. By doing that work, one is serving God, the source of all existence and power. The golden key to unlock the doors of heaven thus lies in our own hands. If we do the work that becomes our duty, unselfishly and well, we will be worshipping God in the right manner and will be able to win freedom from the bonds of *karma* in the end.

lxxxi

Last week, you may remember, we dealt with the question of the distribution of the various functions that society requires for its continued existence from among its members in accordance with their natural qualifications. In dealing with this subject, Śrī Kṛishṇa warned us against making distinctions of high and low in respect of the duties that men have to discharge. It is certainly true that social organisation requires that there should be something like a hierarchy involving various grades and degrees of subordination among the members of society in their relations towards one another. Some have to be masters and others have to be servants, and even the masters in their turn have their masters. Without some kind of arrangement providing for authoritative direction and control, society cannot function as the highly complex organism that it is. Even in that small and compact social unit, the family, the experience of mankind has found it essential to have relations of subordination and supervision among its members. So long as the father continues to be in good health and of sound mind, he generally controls the family. The son has to be subordinate to the father, and traditionally at least, the wife is subordinate to the husband, though one must not forget that the wife rules in many a home. The relations stated above are by no means invariable. When the father becomes old and feeble, the son has to bear the brunt of the family burden. The relation of one being superior and another subordinate, of one exercising authority and another tendering obedience, cannot be avoided, if men are to live in groups and communities, and not as isolated individuals.

The fact that such relations prevail to-day all over the world and will have to prevail even in the ideal conditions painted by dreamers of social utopias, must not lead us to think that the

work of exercising authority is by itself superior to the work of tendering obedience. We are apt to regard the work of the commander-in-chief, for instance, as being more honourable than that of the soldier in the ranks. We are taught in the *Gītā* that such ideas are wrong. Even from the standpoint of common-sense, the intrinsic superiority of the commander-in-chief does not seem so obvious as it appears at first sight. What can the commander-in-chief do without the soldiers who fight under his orders? Nothing is so ridiculous as an army of generals without any soldiers to obey them. Wheresoever men have to work together, wheresoever joint action by men is required, it becomes necessary that authority has to be exercised by a few and obedience tendered by others. Otherwise, there cannot be co-ordination among the members of the community, and such a thing as social life or organisation can have no existence at all.

It may thus be seen that in the relations among men in society we cannot avoid the existence of master and servant. There has to be such a division of functions as to make some men exercise authority and others tender obedience. But this must not lead us to think that some sorts of work are by themselves superior or inferior to other sorts of work. When the functions of men are determined by their qualifications, that is, according as their embodiments are preponderatingly *sāttvika*, *rājasa* or *tāmasa*, we cannot say that one function is more or less worthy than another. The function for which any one is qualified is the most worthy so far as he is concerned. No function is by itself superior or inferior, excellent or wanting in excellence. Every man by performing the function for which he is qualified can attain the salvation of soul-emancipation and God-attainment. The ultimate end attained by the philosopher, the ruler of men, the trader and the servant are all the same, provided each of them undertakes his work on account of his special fitness for it and discharges his duties efficiently and without attachment.

You may be tempted to ask how this can be possible on account of the natural tendency to confound the rank of the worker with the kind of work that he does. Work in itself is neither high nor low, although workers may be higher or lower in rank and pywer. It is so difficult or at least unusual to make this distinction that we are apt to consider the work of the superior

worker as superior in itself even in the manner in which we are prone to regard the work of the subordinate worker as inferior in itself. Śrī Kṛishṇa repeatedly warns us against making this mistake. He declares that we can all attain salvation equally well, whether we occupy higher or lower positions in the organisation of society.

What, you may ask, is the reasoning adopted in support of this contention? It is admitted on all hands, you may say, that the man who sends messages, for instance, occupies a status superior to that of the man who carries messages; and you may question why we should not consider the work of sending messages as superior in itself to the work of carrying messages. In answer to this, I will ask you to observe that society is a complex but well-knit organism. No human being can remain completely independent of the influence and needs of others. Even those who exercise authority in social organisation form no more than cogs in the wheel of a huge mechanism. One who is a master from one standpoint may be a mere servant from another. Take, for example, the head-clerk in a government office. The clerks are subordinate to him, but he is responsible to the manager or superintendent of the office, who in turn is controlled by a superior officer. We may ascend the hierarchy step by step until we reach the ministers of the crown and the sovereign himself. Even they have well recognised limits to their exercise of power. In a democratic country, the sovereign and the ministers are guided by the will of the people, made known through duly elected legislatures. And in countries where democracy does not prevail, the king is almost invariably controlled by a powerful aristocracy. Even the Czar, the autocratic monarch of all Russias, is not his own master. His very words are determined for him by others.

There is such close co-ordination among the members of society that it is not possible for any of them to be absolutely independent of and free from all control by and subordination to others. In fact, as I have often been telling you, there can be no co-ordination without subordination. If this is recognised, you will feel no difficulty in understanding Śrī Kṛishṇa's position that, as all kinds of work are wanted by society, no work can be considered high or low in relation to others. There must be a

sender as well as a carrier of messages. Indeed, one may go farther and say that work which is considered inferior in society is really more important in some respects than the work of supervision and control exercised by those who are in positions of authority. The man who ploughs the land and makes the earth yield the harvest of rice and wheat may have to obey many masters and may not be able to command any one except, perhaps, his own children. This may lead us to regard his work as inferior to that of the owner of the land. But, after all, whose work is really more important for society? Suppose we have owners of lands without the tillers. How long can they manage to live? They will have to give up their luxurious idleness, or perhaps their preoccupation with intellectual pursuits, and till the fields themselves if they are to live at all. The positions of authority are few in the world, and they merely serve to regulate and direct work which is in itself indispensable. The *maistry* who is put in charge of the work of building a house, is a mere looker-on. He exercises control over other men and sees that each workman does his work efficiently. This is police duty more or less, and we have to bear in mind that society is not all policemen. Men who exercise authority are wanted, but they do not make up the whole life of society. One may even say that the soul of society lies in those who obey. The people are more than their rulers.

Viewed in this light, there is no work which can be said to be superior or inferior to any other work. This important lesson is strongly emphasised throughout the *Mahābhārata*. Workers cannot help being high or low, as co-ordination requires subordination. Certain persons are fit to occupy positions of authority in virtue of the *guṇas* dominant in their *prakṛiti*, and certain others are by the same token fit only to serve and obey. If a man's *prakṛiti* is primarily under the influence of the *sattva-guṇa*, then he will blossom out as a philosopher and wise teacher of men. When one's *prakṛiti* is preponderatingly *rājasa*, one will assert oneself and exercise authority. If *tamas* is the dominant factor in one's physical constitution, then one will be fit only to obey orders. In relation to every one the work for which he is fit is the best.

Accepting this position, you may ask why certain persons are fit for one kind of work, certain others fit for another kind of

work and so on. Why is there no equality of talent and endowment among men? Has not the Power which rules us exhibited prejudice and partiality in distributing powers and talents unequally among us? The answer to these questions may be found, according to the *Vedānta*, in the law of *karma*. The Lord has ordained that every man shall reap as he has sown, and He sees to it that this law is properly enforced and executed. No one can gainsay that the law in itself is perfectly impartial, and that being the case, we cannot charge God with partiality. If we go on producing such *karma* as would give us a predominantly *rājasa* constitution, we may acquire the characteristic qualities that are associated with the *rajo-guṇa* and become rulers of men and commanders of armies. But if we act so as to acquire the *tāmasa* temperament, then we will become fit for the work of servants, to obey authority and not to exercise it.

The position of God in relation to the law of *karma* is somewhat like that of the magistrate who decides the cases brought up before him in accordance with the law of the land. You cannot charge a magistrate with partiality for awarding different kinds of punishment to different offenders. He may sentence one man to pay a fine and another to undergo rigorous imprisonment. The reason for the difference in punishment is surely due not to the whims and fancies of the magistrate, but to the different kinds of offences committed. The more heinous the crime, the more severe the punishment. God is like the judge, sentencing according to the nature of the crime. The souls are, as it were, tried by Him for the nature of the lives that they led and awarded punishments according to the nature of the burden of *karma* that they carry. Some get off lightly, others are severely punished. Those whose offences are venial are allowed to dwell in embodiments that are predominantly *sāttvika*, while souls that have strayed farther from the narrow path of duty are given *rājasa* or *tāmasa* embodiments. Comparing great things with small, we may say that the soul which is endowed with a *sāttvika* embodiment is like the man who is fined by the magistrate, while the soul in a *rājasa* embodiment is like a criminal who is given a far heavier punishment such as a term of rigorous imprisonment. In view of the fact that the *rājasa* temperament tends to keep one always on the same level with no prospect of progress, we may

even compare the soul in an embodiment which is preponderatingly *rājasa* to a prisoner sentenced to perpetual imprisonment, to transportation for life. The soul dwelling in a *tāmasa* body, we may compare to a man who qualifies himself for capital punishment.

Now, without the magistrate, the law cannot be enforced, and without the law, the magistrate cannot be impartial. The impartiality of the magistrate rests on the law, the working of the law rests on the magistrate. God is like the executive authority who enforces the law. The kind of punishment that we bring on ourselves is in accordance with the law of *karma*. God is, therefore, strictly impartial, and we have made ourselves what we are by the kind of life that we have led. We cannot blame God for the position in which we find ourselves. We must feel on the other hand that we are ourselves responsible for what we are. The responsibility of God for this consists only in His enforcing the law of *karma*. We may even, perhaps, venture to say that the eternal law of *karma* was promulgated by the Lord.

Now, suppose that I am born with only a capacity to serve. Not content with that, suppose I try to acquire a position where I can exercise authority. What does this kind of conduct on my part imply? It means, if it means anything at all, that I do not approve of the law of *karma*. Having sown the wind, I stand aghast at the harvest of whirlwind. I murmur and grumble at the consequences that accrue from my own actions. Finding fault with the law of *karma*, I must be understood to find fault with the Lord who carries it into effect, and to raise the banner of revolt against the divine government. By doing the duty which appertains to us in virtue of our natural qualifications, we will be showing that we are loyally obeying the behests of God and are not placing ourselves in an attitude of antagonism towards His government of the universe. By such harmonious adjustment of our life to the plan and purpose of God, we will win His gracious favour and be led on to the attainment of the salvation of *moksha*. We must know our position and keep to it as worthy and honourable citizens in the dominion of the Lord. No work is higher or lower in His eyes. We will not be forfeiting His regard, if we are content to do the duties that fall to our lot, even though they may appear low or inferior in the eyes of the world.

In doing our work in life as though it were service rendered to our Lord, we have the best means for getting rid of selfishness which is the greatest enemy of man. You will remember that Śrī Kṛishṇa has often told us that the way of devotion to God is the best and easiest way of conquering selfishness. As long as we live, we cannot but work. There is a physiological as well as a psychological necessity which keeps us from utter passivity and inaction. We may consider the ultimates of metaphysics and come to the conclusion that nothing lives or moves in the universe without the power that comes from the Lord. And from this, we may learn to disclaim all sense of agency in regard to the actions that we have to do and renounce their fruits altogether. If it is not possible for us to reach this conclusion in this manner, we may simply place ourselves in an attitude of love and devotion to the Lord. One may say: "I am a humble and devoted servant of the Lord. In the manner in which a servant serves his master, I am anxious to serve the Lord. All the work that I do in life I regard as service rendered unto Him." If we make our relations with God characterised by sincere love and deep-rooted devotion, then of itself selfishness will slink away from us.

Work for its own sake can have no meaning to most of us. It is more or less a philosophic concept, and even if we occasionally acquire in moments of intellectual clarity the power to understand it, almost insurmountable difficulties are likely to stand in the way of our putting this doctrine into practice. That is why Śrī Kṛishṇa has recommended to us the path of *bhakti* as the easiest to adopt. To the theist, everything lives and moves in the universe on account of the power of the Lord. And he makes, therefore, his relation to the Lord one of service, duty and love. To look upon life in this manner will be perfectly in keeping with the highest truths of philosophy, and at the same time it will be easier to adopt this attitude than to put into practical effect any metaphysical precept about doing our duty for its own sake.

Now, let us consider once again from a slightly different standpoint the case of a person who is born with a capacity to occupy the position of a servant, but who, under the influence of the delusion that some kinds of work are superior to others, aspires to become a ruler of men. Some of you may ask why one

should not be allowed to improve one's position in life. Must one end one's life where one began it? Is the ambition to rise in life equivalent to disloyalty to God? Does loyalty to God mean nothing more than ignoble contentment with one's lot? Here, indeed, there seem to be very serious objections to the whole scheme of thought underlying Śrī Kṛishṇa's treatment of the division of society into classes. But only apparently. For these objections apply only to those who are capable of rising in life. This implies that they have been assigned functions for which they were not qualified at the beginning of their lives, that there was a maldistribution of functions which had to be rectified later on. The very fact that these persons occupied positions of authority later in life shows that they were fit to occupy these positions, but that an imperfect social economy excluded them from those functions at first.

Everyone is taught by Śrī Kṛishṇa to discharge the function for which he is fit. It is only when one endeavours to get into a position for which one is not fit that one can be said to rebel against the laws of God. Even from the standpoint of the welfare of society, it will be obvious that any maldistribution of functions in society will result in grave wastage and loss. If all are free to adopt courses of life for which they have no natural qualifications, the maintenance of order in society would become almost impossible, and the corporate life of the community will tend to become chaotic and unbalanced. And from the standpoint of the members of the community themselves, there would be no fixity of purpose, no order and direction to life. Men will flit from work to work, everywhere indifferent and inefficient. You may ask: What if men succeeded in fields of work for which they were not qualified? Will that not be an incentive to progress? And will not such successes tend to make a society as a whole progressive? The answers to these questions, Śrī Kṛishṇa has already furnished in III. 35 (Vol. I. pp. 269-275). He proceeds to deal with them again in the stanza with which we have to begin our work to-day.

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन् नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥ ४७ ॥

47. One's own duty, not well performed, is better (for one) than another's duty, well performed. One who performs the duty determined by one's own nature, does not incur sin.

Let us try to recapitulate Śrī Kṛishṇa's basic conclusions on the question of the determination of our duties. It is true enough that the secret of duty is not easily understood. And frequently there may arise conflicts of duties which may rend and torture the soul. The theme of some of the most famous tragedies known to the history of dramatic art lies in a conflict of duties, in a struggle, not between a higher principle and a lower, but between two principles which seem equally valid, but which point in contrary directions. The more sensitive a person is to the appeal of the moral law, the more liable is he to experience conflicts of duties. Nevertheless, Śrī Kṛishṇa holds that our duties in life are not indeterminate. You may remember the teaching in the third chapter that the 'qualities' of *prakriti* operate so as to determine the 'qualities' of their correlated work. In other words, the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* constituting a man's embodiment determine the nature of his work in life and his duties. In this manner, Śrī Kṛishṇa shows that men's duties are determined for them by the potentialities of their own nature. As we have been taught recently, it is the duty of the man in whose *prakṛiti* the *sattva-guṇa* predominates to live the *sāttvika* form of life, even as it is the duty of the man in whose *prakṛiti* the *rajo-guṇa* or the *tamo-guṇa* prevails to live the *rājasa* or the *tāmasa* form of life as the case may be. It must be noted, however, that it is the larger outline of life with its basic principles and main purpose that is thus determined. Within the outline so determined, there is scope enough for choice and gradation.

Having shown that the duties of men are thus determinate in character, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to teach that one must stick to one's duty under all circumstances. One cannot change one's duties without in the first instance changing the nature of one's personality. Seldom if ever can such a change take place. And if one attempts to change one's duties without changing the nature of one's being, one is trying to utilise an instrument devised for a specific purpose for ends which it cannot

subserve. And as Śrī Kṛishṇa asked us once before: What can coercion do? To put a man's character through a course of hot-house culture is likely to injure the very springs of his vitality. In forcing ourselves to follow a course of life for which we are not suited, we tend to upset the equilibrium of our lives and become unbalanced. Education must have for its object the drawing out of the qualities within us. It cannot change the endowment with which we are born. If, on account of the prevalence of false ideals in society, we reject the duties which are ours and hanker after the duties of others, we will be weakening the potentialities of our own moral and spiritual development.

Śrī Krishṇa is so much impressed by the dangers of an unnaturally planned life that He declares failure in the allotted field of one's work to be superior to success in a sphere of work for which one is not qualified. You may be tempted to ask whether success in a field of work different from what is understood to be one's own does not show that men can change their duties with advantage to themselves and to society. The answer to this question lies in the fact that such successes as are obtained in this manner are likely to be inferior in quality and impermanent. Take the example of Arjuna. Inheriting the Kshatrriya blood of many generations and having lived for long the life of a successful soldier and general, he feels a sentimental objection to fighting his own kinsmen and friends on the eve of the battle of Kurukshetra. He rationalises to his own conscience this sentimental objection as proceeding from the highest dictates of *dharma* and persuades himself into thinking that the life of the mendicant ascetic is the one best suited for him. Is it not easy for you to see that his *vairāgya* is not firmly rooted? As you will be told presently, he will revert to his natural state, once the flood of sentiment ebbs away; Nature will assert herself.

Successes in unsuited spheres of work are thus unenduring and can only mislead. Honest and sincere efforts to succeed in the work for which one is qualified, are always bound to be useful, whether one succeeds or fails. None of us is perfect. We all have to learn by experience, and it frequently happens that even in the performance of the work for which we are qualified, we have to progress slowly from less perfect accomplishment to more

perfect achievement, or even from undoubted failure to success. If the work is one suited for us, failures cannot weaken us ; they will prove to be veritable stepping-stones to success.

The desire to change the nature of one's duties arises out of false notions in regard to the status of different sorts of work. Once it is realised that there can be no distinction of higher and lower in regard to the various functions that society requires of its members, the tendency to hanker after some sorts of work which are ordinarily considered superior, is undermined. Every kind of work is excellent in relation to the person who is qualified for it. This applies universally to all legitimate functions necessary for running the mechanism of society. No one can incur sin by doing the duty which he is qualified to discharge, and which the well-being of society requires of him. At this point, you may ask: What about men who are called upon to perform duties which appear undesirable and blameworthy, but which none the less the present organisation of society requires? If those who perform them feel that they are in fact blameworthy, why should they not renounce them in favour of some other function or functions which appear less undesirable in their eyes? Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to answer such objections thus :

सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत् ।
सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः ॥ ४८ ॥

48. One must not give up the work for which one is fitted by nature, even though it may be attended with imperfections. For all kinds of work are enveloped by chances of blameworthiness, as fire with smoke.

You may have noticed that I have translated the term, '*dosha*', in the second line somewhat loosely as 'chances of blameworthiness'. That appears to me to convey the sense intended. If it is understood in the usual sense of evil, we are apt to misunderstand the entire drift of Śrī Kṛishṇa's teachings on the question of duty. If we are to do the work which suits us most, be it right or wrong, the robber may argue : "I am fitted by nature to be a robber, and therefore I rob." The murderer may justify homicide on similar grounds, and there would be an

end to all morality and distinctions of right and wrong. Clearly, Śrī Kṛishṇa cannot intend to convey such an impression here.

The position of Hindu philosophy on this question is well brought out in the story of Dharmavyādha, which is found in the *Mahābhārata*. You may remember that Dharmavyādha was a butcher by trade, but was still held in great esteem as a sage and a prophet. Many of us may consider that the trade in flesh is full of cruelty and sin, but if a butcher does his job under the belief that he is carrying out a duty, no sin can accrue to him. So long as there are flesh-eaters among men, society must consider the trade of the butcher legitimate and even necessary. It is not for us to say that those who, in the course of the performance of their duties, have to do work which may not under all circumstances be desirable, are incurring sin thereby. The trade of the butcher was the appointed function in life of Dharmavyādha. It came to him as his *sahaja-karma* ; his position in society, the environment in which he was placed, his natural aptitude and the opportunities that came to him in life, made him a butcher. In doing his work in life as his duty, he was incurring no sin.

It is a common mistake to regard some kinds of work as high, noble and pure, and others as vulgar, inferior and ignoble. But as we have been often taught, work in itself is neither high nor low, neither sinful nor virtuous. With every kind of work, it is possible to find some imperfection or other. From the throne downwards, no position in society is free from chances of blameworthiness. Take the example of a judge, conscientiously administering justice. Even he is likely to err at times. All his judgments, however conscientiously given, may not be right. Suppose such a judge sentences a man to death on the available evidence before him, which seems conclusive for the time being. The prisoner is hanged in due course. Then fresh evidence is discovered and new light is thrown on the case. And it is demonstrated that the man who was hanged had been innocent of the crime. Under such circumstances, if the judge is a really conscientious person, will he not feel that any other work would be better ? Here then is a high and honourable vocation shown to possess possibilities of blameworthiness.

We may proceed in this manner and discover that practically every kind of work in the world is full of possibilities of error and sin. And so, Śrī Kṛishṇa teaches, because some sorts of work are considered by some to be more blameworthy than others, that is no reason why we should renounce our duties, if they happen to be in this condemned list. Please observe that Śrī Kṛishṇa's argument must not be misunderstood to mean that moral depravity, selfishness and sin can be justified under any circumstances. It is one thing to say that all kinds of work are beset with temptations and the risk of sin; and it is quite another to argue that, because of this, no blame attaches to those who indulge in error and sin. The main point to note is that the duty which is determined for one by one's natural aptitudes and opportunities in life must not be given up because there is a popular delusion that it is vulgar or sinful. In other words, our duties have a reference to the social environment in which we are placed. All kinds of work necessary for the well-being of society may become our duties, and it is wrong of us to make distinctions of high and low, vulgar and noble among these. Sin does not spring from the performance of work, but from the manner of its performance.

If, following Śrī Rāmānuja, we understand '*dosha*' to mean 'difficulty', the sense of the stanza would be that no kind of work should be given up because it seems difficult or involves hard physical labour. Even the *jñāna-yogin* should not give up *karma*. Śrī Śaṅkara argues that the teaching of this stanza applies only to those who have not risen to the height of the *jñāna-yogin*. It is possible for those who are blessed with the knowledge of the *Brahman* to renounce all action. The taint of action lies in its belonging to the realm of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. It is the prerogative of the soul to remain aloof from all action.

Please allow me to stop here for the present.

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Last week, you will remember, we were dealing with the question of the due performance of one's duties. The idea that some kinds of work are superior and others inferior, it was then shown, cannot bear serious scrutiny. Every kind of work in the world is capable of giving rise to error and sin. Freedom from the

bondage of *karma* is to be obtained not by renouncing some kinds of work as being undesirable, but by doing the duties that are ours in the right manner. What this right manner is, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to describe thus:

असक्तबुद्धिस्सर्वत्र जितात्मा विगतस्पृहः ।
नैष्कर्म्यसिद्धिं परमां सन्न्यासेनाधिगच्छति ॥ ४९ ॥

49. One whose mind is without attachment in relation to all (kinds of work), who has conquered his self, and who is free from desire, attains through renunciation the supreme success of being free from the impressed tendencies of *karma*.

Notice the force of the expression, '*sarvatra*', here. It seems to me to be used here in the sense of 'in relation to every kind of work'. Whatever the work that falls to our lot, if we do it in the manner indicated here, we will have advanced a long way towards the goal of emancipation of the soul. What matters is the absence of attachment to the results of the work that we do. In order that this may be possible, we must obtain complete mastery over ourselves. Our will must be so strong that it must effectively guard us from straying away from the straight and rugged path of righteousness even by inadvertence. The most alluring temptations must have no fascination for us. Never must it be an instance of knowing the better and doing the worse. One who is *jitātman* is naturally free from the tyranny of desire. This is further emphasised by the injunction to practise *sannyāsa*. You will remember that '*sannyāsa*' has already been defined as '*karma-phala-tyāga*'. We have to perform all our *niyata-karmas*, whether they seem honourable or lowly, blameworthy or flawless.

Arjuna had adduced reasons to show that fighting in the war was wrong and might lead to grave calamities. Here is one answer to Arjuna. So long as fighting in the war was his *niyata-karma* and so long as he discharged that duty without attachment, so long no bonds of *karma* could bind him. Now, it is taught in the *śloka* that if men carry out their duties in a dedicated spirit, having won absolute mastery over themselves,

they will attain *naishkarmya-siddhi*. What does this expression mean? The term, '*karma*', occurring here, we will have to understand in the sense of '*vāsanā*', the impressed tendencies of our minds arising from the nature of the lives that we lead from time to time in our embodied state of existence. If the term, '*karma*', is interpreted thus, then the expression, '*naishkarmya-siddhi*', will mean the state of being free from all such impressed tendencies, or in other words, freedom from *karma-bandha*. When we achieve this, we gain entrance, so to speak, to the ante-chamber to Heaven; we qualify ourselves for final release. *Samsiddhi* is the goal of salvation, while *naishkarmya-siddhi* is the means towards the attainment of the goal. Without attaining the latter, the soul cannot win emancipation for itself. The epithet, 'supreme', is here applied to *naishkarmya-siddhi* itself, for the reason that it qualifies one for attaining the final destiny of the soul, and indeed makes such attainment practically inevitable.

We may note in passing that there are some other interpretations of this phrase. It has been taken to refer to that attitude of meditation, which is the achievement of *jñāna-yoga*. Śaṅkarāchārya gives two alternative views. It may mean the knowledge by means of which one realises the identity of the soul with the actionless *Brahman*, a knowledge which ensures freedom from all action. Alternatively, it may mean the attainment of the state in which one remains the actionless self, the state of imminent salvation.

सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्म तथाप्नोति निबोध मे ।
समासेनैव कौन्तेय निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा ॥ ५० ॥

50. Learn from Me in brief, O Arjuna, how one who has attained (the) success (referred to in the previous verse) attains thereafter the *Brahman*—which is the supreme culmination of knowledge.

Here begins the consideration of another interesting question. Having obtained *naishkarmya-siddhi*, how does one proceed to attain *samsiddhi* which is the next higher step, and indeed the consummation of the wisdom of the philosopher? The attainment of *moksha* is the attainment of the *Brahman*. We need not pause to decide whether the attainment of the *Brahman* means becoming

one with Him, or attaining a state where one realises one's kinship with the *Brahman*, or where one is, so to speak, never parted from His company and renders constant service unto Him. Differences of opinion on this question are found among the *Vedāntins*, but all subscribe to the view that the attainment of the *Brahman* is the supreme goal of life, and that the achievement of *naishkarmya-siddhi* leads on to it. In the succeeding three *ślokas*, Śrī Kṛishṇa explains briefly how one may achieve this supreme perfection.

बुद्ध्या विशुद्धया युक्तो धृत्यात्मानन्नियम्य च ।
शब्दादीन्विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च ॥ ५१ ॥

विविक्तसेवी लघ्वाशी यतवाक्कायमानसः ।
ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः ॥ ५२ ॥

अहङ्कारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं परिग्रहम् ।
विमुच्य निर्ममश्शान्तो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥ ५३ ॥

51-3. He who is endowed with a pure mind, who controls himself by the power of his will, renouncing sound and other objects of sense, and casting aside desire and aversion, who resorts to solitude, who eats lightly, who has his speech, body and mind well under control, who is ever engaged in the *yoga* of meditation, who holds fast to detachment, giving up egoism, violence, pride, desire, anger and property, who is free from the sense of possession and is tranquil—he attains the *Brahman*.

I may note at the outset that the phrase which I have rendered as 'he attains the *Brahman*' means literally 'he becomes the *Brahman*'. Only one school of *Vedāntic* thought holds that in the state of *moksha* the soul realises its identity with the *Brahman*. Those teachers of *Vedānta* who conceive differently of the ultimate destiny of the soul, interpret this phrase in accordance with their views. According to Rāmānujāchārya, the term, '*brahman*', means the *ātman* in this context, and the expression, '*brahma-bhuyāya kalpate*', must be understood thus: (he) realises the true nature of his soul, freed from all bondage. Madhvāchārya says that the phrase, '*brahma-bhūya*', means constant contemplation of the *Brahman*. These differences of opinion do not stand

in the way of equal emphasis being laid on the ethical qualifications enumerated here by all the three schools of *Vedāntic* thought. And these we may now proceed to consider.

First of all, those who live the life which leads on to *Brahma-prāpti* through *naishkarmya-siddhi* must have purity of mind. Their thoughts must be free from the taint of sensuality and selfishness. If our mind is pure, then our *dhṛiti* will be *sāttvikī* and will help us to control ourselves. We shall then be able to exercise mastery over our senses. We shall not be led away by the allurements of the pleasures of the senses; we shall be liberated from our bondage to desire and aversion. In order to achieve this self-conquest, we must spend some time in introspective contemplation. Whiling away our time chattering with friends or acquaintances is hardly likely to help us in this direction. To enable us to concentrate, freedom from *vikshepa* or distraction is clearly essential. The mind that is unfit for concentration is also unfit for self-realisation and God-realisation.

Love of solitude, however, has its own dangers. It may make us selfish misanthropes, devoid of all interest in the welfare of our neighbours. We have, therefore, to steer clear of the two extremes. We must lead a life of service, but also, whenever possible, we must find a little time to meditate on the nature of our souls and the auspicious qualities of the Lord who is the fountain of all love and mercy. The art of *yoga* will be difficult for any one who indulges in any kind of excesses. Our food must be light and moderate. The body, the tongue and the mind must be brought under the stern control of the will. We must not give way to excitements or gusts of passion which unbalance the natural equilibrium of our lives and land us in folly or crime.

We are asked to be constantly engaged in meditation. The value of meditation as a great discipline in life is not recognised so widely as it deserves. It helps us to cultivate sympathy and selflessness. If we train ourselves to think of those around us as our friends, we will be able to curb hatred and jealousy, and participate in the happiness and grief of others. Towards the good, our attitude must be one of appreciation. In the case of the wicked, we must see that, while we condemn the sin, we do not drive the sinner beyond the pale of sympathy. If we take up

such an attitude, our lives will be characterised by friendliness, kindness, peace and harmony. To cultivate this attitude, meditation will be of immense help. It teaches us self-control and it enables us to look upon our neighbours in the light in which we are prone to look on ourselves. This moral discipline leads us to *samādhi*, makes us happy and places us in harmony with our environment. We are then asked to eschew violence and pride, give up the sense of agency and possession. We must never think of ourselves as great or good, strong or perfect. Finally, we are asked to praetise *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*, that is, to give up *kāmya-karmas* completely and perform our *niyata-karmas* without attachment.

It may have struck most of you that the qualifications for attaining the *Brahman* enumerated above can be acquired only by those who have succeeded in the practice of the *yoga* which Śrī Kṛishṇa has been teaching throughout the whole of the *Gītā*. It involves the practice of *samatva*, meditation, and restraint of the senses, and the performance of duties without attachment. Often, critics whose sole concern seems to be fault-finding tell us that Hinduism is too speculative, that it has little relation to conduct and purity in life, that it makes the achievement of salvation dependent on mere wisdom. This charge, I am convinced, is baseless. The *Upanishads* declare that none, however wise, can attain the *Brahman*, if there is no freedom from evil-doing. This view is reiterated by Śrī Kṛishṇa who makes it clear here that for becoming the *Brahman* or becoming like unto the *Brahman*, the ethical qualifications mentioned above are absolutely essential. Most of these, perhaps, will be comprised in *sāttvikī buddhi* and *sāttvikī dhṛiti*. But Śrī Kṛishṇa is anxious that we should commit no mistake and has spared us no details. Mere wisdom, therefore, cannot lead us to attain the *Brahman*. Not that the acquisition of wisdom is unnecessary, but that something else is also wanted. More than knowledge, character and conduct count : he who is wanting in purity of life and conduct is unfit to attain the *Brahman*, however extensive his knowledge and however profound his wisdom.

Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to delineate further characteristics of one who lives a life free from evil-doing and full of peace and harmony.

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
समस्सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम् ॥ ५४ ॥

54. (Such a person) having attained the *Brahman* and being tranquil in spirit, neither sorrows nor desires. Being alike to all beings, he acquires supreme devotion to Me.

The term, '*brahma-bhūta*', which occurs in the *śloka* literally means 'one who has become the *Brahman* or become like unto the *Brahman*.' Nevertheless, it does not stand here for one who has attained the ultimate salvation of *moksha*, whether that state of final release is understood as involving the realisation by the soul of its identity with the Absolute or not. It is not the *muktāvasthā* that is referred to. On the other hand it seems clear that the verse is dealing with one who is desirous of attaining *moksha* and is qualifying himself therefor. I may refer you in this connection to the use of the word in a not dissimilar sense in V. 24 (*Vide* Vol. I, pp. 526-7). You may remember that in that context I drew your attention to the views of *advaitins* and those who differ from them on the exact significance of the term. While Śaṅkarāchārya interprets it as meaning 'having become the *Brahman* even while alive here', another commentator, not less eminent, understands it as indicating the unlimited condition of the mind of the *yogin* who has attained self-realisation and God-realisation. To become the *Brahman*, we concluded then, is to become free, as far as possible, from those limitations which are imposed on the soul in consequence of its being imprisoned in a material body. And it is needless to point out to you that self-realisation and God-realisation are well capable of bestowing on one this kind of freedom from limitations to a very large extent.

You may also recall the declaration of the *Upanishads* that when all the desires which are found in the heart of one are relinquished, then the mortal becomes the immortal and attains the *Brahman* here. That is, when the material and other limitations to which the spirit is ordinarily subjected are reduced to the vanishing point, as happens in the case of such a *yogin*, then it is a necessary consequence that he becomes like unto the *Brahman* in

his state of self-realisation and God-realisation. Naturally enough, such a person who is in this manner fitting himself for becoming the *Brahman* or becoming like unto the *Brahman*, will lead a life which is illumined by *sāttvikī buddhi* and directed by *sāttvikī dhṛiti*. Free from all attachment to the things of this world, he cannot feel any grief, nor be subject to any desire. He will be free from *rāga* and *dvesha*.

We are next informed that he will also be alike in relation to all beings. We may understand this in two ways. Having succeeded in self-realisation and being qualified to attain God-realisation, he can find nothing in this world of the least value when compared with the highest object of attainment which is already looming on the horizon of his vision. When once the realisation of God becomes even distantly visible to one's inner eye, nothing else can spur one's ambition or propel one's desire. It is as though the values of the world did not count in the utter condemnation that overtakes them in the light of religious experience. Among many insignificant things, it serves no purpose to grade and evaluate. If, as we are sometimes asked to do by mathematicians, we look upon the zero as standing for something infinitesimally small, we may find that in several cases the symbol, zero, may represent different quantities. Nevertheless, for all practical and even mathematical purposes, all zeroes are equally insignificant. To one who is blessed with divine vision, the values of the world will all appear equally trivial and unworthy of serious attention. He will no more distinguish between them than we are likely to choose between one zero and another.

Another way of understanding the *samatva* referred to here may also be noted. I am referring to the rule of *samatva* arising from the experience of self-realisation and God-realisation. You all know that self-realisation demonstrates to us that the soul is really existent, that it is immutable and immortal, as contradistinguished from the body which is mutable and mortal. When this distinction is learnt, we understand that the soul is the truly living and enduring part of us, and that the body is only a ceaselessly changing and unessential attribute. The soul in every being can be thus seen to be the basic reality. And the soul of one being is not different from the soul of another, judged as soul. The difference between a dog and a man is not due to the soul of the

dog being different from the soul of the man, but arises out of the differences between their bodies. In the one case, the soul resides in a canine configuration, while in the other it tenants a human embodiment. But since it is the soul alone that is the basic reality and as all souls are alike, the wise look upon all beings, the good and the wicked, the holy cow and the despised dog, with equal eyes. In this manner self-realisation compels us to look on all beings alike.

The lesson of equality may also be learnt through God-realisation. The *yogin* in the state of *samādhi*, as you have been frequently told, realises the true nature of his self. He obtains the *pratyaksha-jñāna* of his *ātman*, sees his soul (so to speak) face to face. A further stage in the practice of *yoga* will lead on to the *pratyaksha-jñāna* of God, the direct experience of the Divine. When the successful *yogin* realises God within himself, he recognises that in the case of every soul this possibility of God-realisation exists, and accordingly looks on all beings with equal eyes. If all are worthy abodes of God, why should we make meaningless distinctions of high and low, pure and impure, worthy and unworthy ?

By living the kind of life described above, the life of service and purity and peace, one becomes fit to attain the *Brahman*, and gains *parā bhakti* or supreme devotion. We may pause a little here to enquire about the true significance of the term. *Bhakti* is sometimes classified into *sādhana-bhakti* and *sādhya-bhakti*, that is, *bhakti* conceived as a means to an end and *bhakti* as an end in itself. If we do our duties under the belief that by so doing we are serving God, we will achieve *naishkarmya-siddhi* (verse 46) ; the devotion here is a means to an end, the end being the attainment of *moksha*. But what is spoken of in this verse as *parā bhakti* is, I believe, none other than *sādhya-bhakti*, devotion which is an end in itself.

There are those who believe that *bhakti* persists even in the state of ultimate salvation. After achieving the supreme experience of God-realisation, in the blissful freedom of the state of *moksha*, what is to be the end and aim of one's existence ? It is suggested sometimes that the enfranchised souls look upon this supreme and disinterested devotion to God as their only end and aim. When

once we get a glimpse of the nature of God through direct personal experience, we may at times feel disposed to believe that it would be better to go on serving the God whom we have realised by remaining, if need be, one step behind the goal, than to become one with Him, if that be the goal. Many a *bhakta*, while believing in the goal of merging one's identity in God as the highest purpose of all philosophy and all spiritual effort, has nevertheless been sufficiently intoxicated with the madness of *bhakti* to declare: "I will not strive to reach the goal. For when I do reach there, I cease to be distinct from Him whom it is bliss to serve." You may thus see that this great bliss of supreme devotion to God may well be conceived as the highest goal before humanity, or as others think, it may be a step behind the goal. It is immaterial, however, to which view we subscribe, for even those who may be looked upon as being one step behind the goal, are content with their state as perfect in itself, and do not want to proceed further. Enough has been said to enable us to distinguish between *parā bhakti* which constitutes an ideal in itself and *sādhana-bhakti* which helps us in our moral struggle against selfishness and leads us on to *naishkarmya-siddhi*.

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान्यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।
ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ॥ ५५ ॥

55. By (this supreme) devotion, he understands Me truly, who I am and how great. Then, knowing Me, as I am in reality, he thereafter enters into Me.

The realisation of God through devotion is something different from the reasoned conclusions of speculative philosophy on the existence and nature of God. Our mind breaks down utterly when taking the measure of God. It is related in our scriptures how the sage Bahva, being questioned about the *Brahman* by Vashkalin, said to him, "Learn the *Brahman*, O friend," and became silent. When the question was repeated again and again, Bahva explained to Vashkalin: "I am teaching you indeed, but you do not understand. Silent is that Self." The highest wisdom must recognise its own limitations and confess its impotence in the presence of God. And so the *rishis* have declared that words and thoughts turn round the *Brahman* without finding It, and that we

can describe It only as *neti, neti,* (not this, not this). The realisation of the *bhakta*, however, has all the vitality and vividness of direct personal experience. There is nothing nebulous or hazy, inconclusive or indefinite about it. The experience may in itself be indescribable, but it is not the less certain on account of it.

Śrī Kṛishṇa then goes on to state that those who know Him truly through devotion will enter into Him. What does this entrance into God mean? By some it is understood as implying the loss of separate identity from God in the state of *moksha*. There are, however, others who believe that the personality (or the individuality) of the soul is not lost in the state of *moksha*. Their views, perhaps, will become clear, if you will allow me to make use of a similitude. Suppose you enter a city. Do you then become the city itself? Surely not. You become, it is true, part of a larger social unit, but your individuality is not lost. Your citizenship, with its rights and duties, privileges and liabilities, may be a new feature about your life, but you are not reduced to nothingness by becoming a citizen. In a similar way, we may look upon *moksha* as the acquisition of the citizenship of the City of God. In the state of final emancipation, you become endowed with divine qualities and get directly related to God. However we understand this final goal of all human pursuit, whether it is losing one's identity by becoming one with God, or becoming closely and intimately related unto Him, we have to note that the supreme devotion which has been described above helps us to reach this goal. It may in itself be taken as the goal, for once we are imbued with this *bhakti*, the next higher stage, if there be one, is inevitably reached.

Please allow me to conclude here our work for the day.

lxxxiii

We were dealing last week with what Śrī Kṛishṇa described as *parā bhakti* or supreme devotion. We saw that it is devotion pursued as an end in itself and thus differentiated from devotion practised with ulterior motives. Śrī Kṛishṇa now proceeds to deal with the day to day life of one who is imbued with such supreme devotion, more especially with his attitude towards work.

3 G—43

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सदा कुर्वाणो मद्व्यपाश्रयः ।
मत्प्रसादादवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम् ॥ ५६ ॥

56. Even though he may be doing all kinds of work, he attains through My grace the eternal imperishable seat, being dependent on Me.

Here again there is a reference to the old, old question : How are we to live and labour so as to be free from the taint of *karma*? If every action leaves its impress behind, and the cumulative effect of all our actions is to imprison the soul, it seems at first sight that the easiest and most obvious way of deliverance is abstinence from action. But, as a matter of actual fact, it is not possible to remain completely inactive. It is a law of our being that we must work—work being understood in the broad sense in which it is referred to in the *Gītā*—as long as we live. And so we must find out a way of work which will yet not taint and bind our souls. For achieving this purpose, Śrī Kṛishṇa asks us to restrain our natural tendencies in the direction of desire and pleasure, and to realise through mental concentration and meditation the nature of the soul. Self-realisation is bound to lead us to the practice of *samatva*. When the next higher stage in the practice of *yoga* is reached, and the reality of God is discovered through direct experience, then we will come to feel that there can be nothing more worthy of being the purpose of our life than service unto God. We have to carry on our work in the world which is almost wholly impelled by *prakṛiti*, as service rendered unto the Lord. This may be done either by imagining that our work in life is of such a kind, or by actually feeling that every work that we do is nothing other than an opportunity for paying our homage and affirming our fealty to the sovereign lord of the universe.

Between the conception of our life as one continuous service rendered to God as a matter of mental *bhāvanā*, and the realisation of this fact as a matter of *pratyakshānubhava*, there is a vast difference, and it is this difference which distinguishes *sādhana-bhakti* from *sādhya-bhakti*. Allow me to make clear this distinction. Suppose it comes to my knowledge that a certain

person wants to injure me. There is a natural tendency to reciprocate the attitude, but I am taught by all religions to behave in quite a different manner. I am really asked not to regard him as an enemy. If I am really living the *sāttvika* life which is so strongly and so repeatedly recommended for our adoption in the *Gītā*, I must so adjust my relations to him as if I looked upon him as a friend. I have to do this by exercising compulsion on my mind, by forcing it to regard him as other than what he actually is. This kind of mental effort is *bhāvanā*, and it helps us to adjust our relations to men and God. Through the power of *bhāvanā*, we may consider good men as bad and bad men as good, though perhaps we are more likely to do the former than the latter. *Yogins* practise *bhāvanā*. It is said, for instance, that they will not differentiate between gold and a clod of earth. Put a piece of gold and a clod of earth into the hands of a *yogin*. He will spontaneously think that gold is mud and that mud is is gold. Through the influence of *bhāvanā*, ideas become potent, and affect our behaviour. Prejudice and predilection arise out of it. Irrational distrust or dislike of a man to whom you are introduced or affection towards one to whose faults you turn a blind eye—both spring from the power of *bhāvanā* to colour the reality of things.

Now, when we practise *sādhana-bhakti*, we discharge our duties as though the performance of our duties was service to the Lord. I say advisedly, "as though it was service to the Lord". For one who practises *sādhana-bhakti* has not realised that the performance of one's duties in life is actually service to the Lord ; he merely looks upon it as such. And you know that the process of looking upon things as other than what they are is *bhāvanā*. To him the performance of duties of itself does not appear as service to God ; he consciously regards it as such service. Service to God is the result of his *bhāvanā*. But if one has attained the state in which one is fit for the practice of *parā bhakti*, then no *bhāvanā* is necessary. Life itself becomes service rendered unto God. The discharge of our duties does not appear to be something different which has to be viewed by an effort of will as service to God. *Parā bhakti*, therefore, gives us the direct personal experience, whereby we realise that everything that we do in life is nothing other than service to God.

If one carries out his duties in this manner through this supreme devotion, then his *bhakti* becomes entirely dependent on God. He aspires after God and at the same time relies on His abounding grace to reach the goal. God becomes in his case both the *upāya* and the *upeya*, the means and the end. Relating himself to God in this manner, such an aspirant engages himself in all kinds of activities. He makes no distinctions of high and low, superior and inferior, among men, because he never confounds the rank of the worker with the nature of his work. Masters and servants there must be in society. Obedience, as the poet says, is the bond of rule. All transactions (*vyavahāra*) require provision for superordination and subordination. For the sake of running the machinery of society, these distinctions are necessary. If you get rid of one kind of distinction, another is sure to take its place. As I have often said, there can be no co-ordination without subordination. There are thus good reasons for the existence of masters and servants in society. But need we extend the distinction to the kinds of work that they do? Must we look upon the work of mastery as by itself superior to the work of service? The answer is 'No'. All work is equally fit to be performed as service to God. For He is the source of all power and all action. It is through the power of God that we all do our bits of work. We are what we are, because of the laws that He has promulgated. It is true, of course, that we are the architects of our destiny through the operation of the law of *karma*, but it is in accordance with His will that the law of *karma* is working.

Everything that we do or achieve is, therefore, done and achieved by us through the power which we derive from Him who is the source of all power. If we reject the work that falls to our lot in accordance with our endowment and opportunities in life and yearn after some vocation unsuited to us, then in spirit at least we shall be acting as rebels against God and showing a "will most incorrect to heaven". So even from the standpoint of strict theistic philosophy and reasoning, we are bound to lead our lives under the belief that all our power to do and dare is derived from Him, and that, therefore, we must do our work in life as service rendered unto God.

Actions performed in this spirit cannot give rise to *karma*. For what is *karma*? It is the internal *samskāra* or impression

left behind by our actions, and as we have learnt, it is the potency of these internal impressions which compels the soul to become incarnated from time to time in different embodiments. As we have made a distinction between the worker and the work that he does, even so we must distinguish between work and that which produces *karma*. The *Upanishads* clearly teach that work itself does not cause the clinging of the soul to the body, but that the attitude of the mind with which work is done is the cause of the bondage or the emancipation of the soul. The mind which is free from attachment of all kinds becomes the means for the liberation of the soul, even as the mind which is *sakāma* or associated with desire is certain to ensure bondage for the soul. Work cannot cause bondage, it is taught, if the disposition with which it is done is free from attachment to the results thereof.

Various methods have been suggested for overcoming the natural tendency of our minds to become attached to the results of our work. You may remember the recommendation to realise the part played by *prakṛiti* in the performance of work. This is one way of undermining *ahaṅkāra* and *mamakara*. You may also remember the precept to carry on our work under a sense of duty. More desirable than these is the method of *bhakti-yoga*, which helps us to realise that the agent of all actions is God. When the agency of our deeds belongs to God, we cannot have any feelings of egoistic self-importance or any sense of property. The man who, through the practice of *parā bhakti*, is able to realise as a matter of direct personal experience that the true agent of all his deeds is God who is in him as well as in other beings, recognises that he is a mere instrument in the hands of God.

It is possible for a labourer to qualify himself for practising this kind of life equally with a king, and for a *chaṇḍāla* as much as a Brahmin. No distinctions based on birth or rank have any meaning in this context. None can be more than an instrument in the hands of God. When we realise that God is the true agent of our deeds and that we are tools intended for carrying out His purposes, then we will not be troubled by even the shadow of attachment, unless it be that we feel the supreme satisfaction of having served our God effectively and well. As a matter of fact, we are told by our great teachers that this satisfaction will come to one who lives this kind of life, whether one wishes for it or not;

but one must not long for it. For gloating over this satisfaction or even hankering after it is calculated to make one selfish and self-complacent. However this may be—and most of us are far enough from the state when this question will assume practical interest—the point to note is this. If we practise *parā bhakti*, and realise as a matter of direct personal experience that we are mere instruments in the hands of God, then we can engage ourselves in all sorts of activities and yet be free from the bondage of *karma*.

We then reach a state which is everlasting through the grace of God. Notice the force of the expression, '*mat-prasādāt*', (through My grace) here. If we are mere instruments in the hands of God, can we ever achieve anything? Can the axe cut the tree by itself? There must be a wood-cutter, and when he wields the axe, it cuts the tree. Or to vary the analogy, no machine can work without the help of the energy which runs it. If the steam-engine is deprived of coal and water, it will cease to work. No instrument by itself can accomplish anything. There must be a power behind the instrument, a propelling energy which gets work out of it. If it is clear that no instrument can achieve anything by itself, we can see how very wrong we are in attributing credit to an instrument for the achievements wrought through it.

Take the case of a great warrior, wielding a powerful sword, with which he succeeds in working great havoc in many battles. Suppose he becomes particularly attached to the sword, thinking: "It is this trusty blade that has brought me success and fame in war. I must keep it as my most valued possession." And to show the affection that he felt towards the sword, let us suppose, he puts it in a jewelled scabbard. Now the value of the scabbard, the fame that the sword derives from its jewelled sheath—are all these due to the intrinsic excellence and worth of the sword? That cannot be; for the sword is little more than an instrument to serve the ends of the warrior.

We are in relation to God what the sword is in the hands of the warrior. If the sword serves its master well, he becomes pleased with it and puts it in a valuable scabbard. If we do our duties in life, believing and perhaps actually realising in experience that we are mere instruments in the hands of God and that we are

called upon to do our duties as service rendered unto Him, then God will become pleased with us and, out of His abounding grace, will find for us a home in a world which is free from decay or destruction. When we realise a place in the sphere of the enduring and everlasting life of the spirit, then we will feel more than ever that the honour and privilege attained by us is due to His graciousness in having considered us, insignificant as we are, worthy of His *prasāda*.

As we have had many occasions to note, we cannot modify to the slightest extent the destiny which God has appointed for the world, whether we live our lives well or ill. The only choice before us is to adjust ourselves harmoniously or inharmoniously to the gigantic machinery of the universe. By an inharmonious adjustment, we do not affect Him or His plans in the least, but succeed only in contriving ruin for ourselves. Let all the bad men in the world band together and say : " We are so many, so strong and powerful. Let us try and see if we cannot modify God's government of the universe to our own selfish advantage or pleasure." Do you think there is the least chance of their succeeding in their conspiracy? It is simply impossible. They will be only dashing their heads against a rock, the rock of ages in fact. If, on the other hand, we adjust ourselves harmoniously to the machinery of the universe and feel in our heart of hearts that we have little capacity to serve the ends of God, if we do our allotted duties in life under the conviction that we are mere tools in the hands of God, then we may become worthy of His favour. And when He is pleased, He may give us a place in the enduring and everlasting life of the spirit, even as the wielder of the sword, when it serves him well, honours it by putting it in a valuable scabbard.

We have now seen how those who are imbued with *parā bhakti*, spontaneously and instinctively see all the activities of life as service rendered unto God. Naturally enough, they are not affected by the fetters of *karma*, whatever activities they may engage in. They do not feel any sense of agency in relation to their acts. Having in this manner described those who are blessed with supreme devotion to the Lord, Śrī Kṛishṇa asks Arjuna to follow the example set before him. He says :

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः ।
बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव ॥ ५७ ॥

57. Making over all work unto Me with a discriminating intelligence, holding Me to be the Supreme Being and seeking a state of mind conducive to union (with Me), concentrate your mind on Me always.

We have discussed more than once what dedication of all actions to God means (*vide* III. 30, IX. 27 etc.). It can signify nothing more than the making over of all our assumed agential rights and responsibilities unto God; for we can never free ourselves from the obligation of doing our duties in life. God is the source of all life and the fountain of all energy. As such, He is the ultimate agent of all work and the supporter of all life in the universe. In a very real sense, therefore, we are mere instruments through whom flow the life and energy of the Divine. This must be realised not as a mere intellectual conviction, but with the whole of our being. When we realise this fact in this manner, and in consequence are ever mindful of God, the daily routine of life assumes the grandeur of work rendered in the cause of the Lord. Nothing that we do or have to do is too mean or trivial to be treated as part of the service due to God. When we surrender ourselves to God in this manner, His grace will protect us in all difficulties and lead us on to the final goal. This is what we are told in the next stanza.

मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि ।

58. Ever thinking of Me, you will cross all obstacles with My grace...............

You may remember the famous stanza in which Śrī Kṛishṇa promises to look after the welfare of all those who are constantly devoted to Him (IX. 22). It is a false sense of our own importance that makes us think that we are the architects of our own fortune. In one sense, of course, we are what we have made ourselves to be, a sum, so to speak, of the good and the evil we have done in the past. But life will not be life, if there is no scope for a certain

amount of contingency, for some unexpectedness and unpredictableness about it. The very fact that we are free—though perhaps within certain well-defined limits—indicates this, and because of this, the ship of life will have to voyage across unchartered seas. And here, it is the guiding hand of God alone that can save us. Not otherwise than through the grace of God may we obtain solace in our sorrows, and the steadfastness that can take us to our goal. Indeed, the salvation of soul-emancipation is a gift of God. Our duty is to be devoted to Him, looking upon such devotion itself as the end and aim of life. The grace of God will protect us then both here and hereafter.

...अथ चेत्त्वमहंकारान्न श्रोष्यसि विनङ्क्ष्यसि ॥ ५८ ॥

यदहङ्कारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे ।
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ॥ ५९ ॥

स्वभावजेन कौन्तेय निबद्धस्स्वेन कर्मणा ।
कर्तुं नेच्छसि यन्मोहात्करिष्यस्यवशोऽपि तत् ॥ ६० ॥

58. . . . . If, however, out of egoism, you do not listen, you will be ruined.

59. If, out of pride, you think, "I will not fight", this determination of yours is futile. (For) Nature will compel you to fight.

60. You are bound by your own natural-born *karma*, O Arjuna. That which out of ignorance you desire not to do, that you will do even without self-control.

In these verses, the position of Arjuna is succinctly summed up and the alternatives before him clearly outlined. You may remember that Śrī Kṛishṇa began His teaching by pointing out to Arjuna that his sorrow at killing his own kith and kin was misplaced. For the souls being immortal, he could not slay, nor could his enemies in battle be slain. What was essential in them all would survive the chances of war. Śrī Kṛishṇa followed this

up by showing the cause of the bondage of the immortal soul in the mortal prison-house of matter. Every action of ours tends to produce its own clinging *samskāra* in the shape of *pāpa* or *puṇya*, and this it is which binds the soul. If we are to be free from the fetters that our actions forge for our souls, we must do our work in life without selfish attachment of any kind to the results of our actions. Arjuna is then called upon to do his duty as a soldier in the war being waged for the vindication of justice and righteousness on the holy plains of Kurukshetra.

Let us note carefully the reasoning that Śrī Kṛishṇa adopts for persuading Arjuna to play his part in the war. By birth and breeding Arjuna was a soldier, inheriting the Kshatriya blood of countless generations. And here was a war between the forces of light and darkness, between justice and injustice. Arjuna was one of those on whom fell the responsibility of taking the decision to declare hostilities. Now he was being called upon to fulfil his duties in the cause of justice. There could not be even the shadow of a doubt on this point; for as a special favour, God was pleased to show Arjuna His universal form and demonstrate to him the rights and wrongs of the question. Because the duty of killing his kith and kin was unpleasant, was it right on the part of Arjuna to fight shy of war and retire from the field of battle? What possessed him for the moment was an ignorant and selfish pessimism which tempted him to indulge in the luxury of sentimental self-pity. Veiled and disguised selfishness was at the heart of his objection to fight—aversion to the unpleasant task of killing many whom he liked or respected or who were bound to him by ties of blood, fear that his participation in such a fratricidal war might burden him with sin. He was rationalising and moralizing his weakness by giving it grandiose names, such as love of humanity, dislike of temporal victory and so forth.

Let us try to see what would have happened, if, overcome by this subtle egoism, Arjuna had turned his back on the battle-field and betaken himself to a life of mendicant asceticism. In the first place, how long would that life have lasted? Springing, so to speak, from the froth and bubble that floated on the current of his spiritual life, Arjuna's *vairāgya* would have met with a speedy and ignoble end. Nature, as they say, will assert herself. The fever of war would stir his blood, the taunts of his enemies

would rouse his wrath. Before long, he who declined to take up arms on account of his love of mankind, would have returned to the fray, mad with anger and overcome by the contagious enthusiasm of war. And behind this return to the battle-field would lie the hurt to his vanity and a senseless acquiescence in the passions of the mob, motives tainted through and through with pride and selfishness.

So, then, sooner or later, whether he liked it or not, Arjuna would be fighting. A choice of motives alone is open to him. Hearkening to the words of Śrī Krishṇa, reflecting on his duty and on the commands of God, he might fight selflessly and achieve salvation. Or out of a selfish desire to shirk an unpleasant duty, he might retire temporarily from the battle, only to return again, spurred on by the fever of war and the taunting challenge of his enemies. In this case, doing the same work, namely, fighting in the war, he will forge for himself fresh fetters of *karma*. These in brief are the alternatives before Arjuna.

Emphasis has been laid in these verses on the *prakṛiti* of Arjuna. Lest we should forget the lesson previously taught, that, while *prakṛiti* is the immediate impeller of all work, God is the ultimate agent thereof, Śrī Kṛishṇa reiterates :

ईश्वरस्सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥ ६१ ॥

61. The Lord is seated in the region of the heart of all beings, O Arjuna, revolving all beings, mounted on the mechanism (of the body) by means of His wonderful power.

We all tend to act according to our own nature, but beyond the *prakṛiti* that we have made for ourselves by our past, there is God who is the source of all power and activity in the universe. Our physical constitution is dominated by certain tendencies and qualities, in strict accordance with the law of *karma*. And in turn our actions arise from our physical and psychological endowment, whether acquired or inherited. They belong, so to speak, to the realm of *kshetra*, of something which is not spirit. But *prakṛiti* dissociated from *purusha*, is *jaḍa*, inert. And the

self in us is akin to, or as some think, identical with the Supreme Soul of the universe. If we look far enough into the cave of our heart, we shall find the hidden Ancient to whom we owe our very existence. Our bodies are like machines, skeletal structures of bone and muscle, nerve and brain. The spirit that animates us and makes us conscious and alive is of the nature of the divine. But for the divinity within us, which makes all the world one, there will be no life and no thought in the universe. The energy that makes the mechanism of the body move and think and feel, the power that drives it, is derived from the Lord Himself, who constitutes the very foundation of our spiritual life. Thus, our actions are determined in the first instance by the *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* dominating us for the time being in accordance with the law of *karma*, and ultimately by God Himself who set this law in operation. If we are to be rid of the domination of *prakṛiti*, we must behold the light within us and follow the path which it illumines.

It may be noted here that the term, '*māyā*', occurring in this stanza has been understood differently by Śaṅkarāchārya and Rāmānujāchārya. The former attributes to it the sense of delusion. According to that view, this verse would mean that the Lord within us drives us about by means of the illusion of *māyā*. The *Nirguṇabrahman* of the *advaitins* is actionless. All activity remains only in the domain of *māyā*. Śrī Rāmānuja on the other hand interprets the term as the *prakriti* made up of *sattva* and other *guṇas* and belonging to the Lord, a meaning which is not unknown in ancient works. Understood in this way, God is looked upon as the source of all power and activity in the universe which is fundamentally—and not merely relatively—real. The region of the heart of course stands for the centre and source of our being. And by the statement that God is seated there is conveyed the suggestion that we live and move and have our being in God.

It may also be observed here that the comparison of the relations between the body and the soul to those subsisting between a mechanical contrivance and the motive force working it is not foreign to our ancient thinkers. In the *Kaṭhopanishad* there is a well-known passage which describes the self as the owner of the chariot, the body as the chariot, the intellect as

the charioteer, the *manas* as the reins and the senses as the horses that drag the chariot. We may, therefore, look upon the word, '*yantra*', in this *śloka* as signifying the mechanism made up of the body and the senses, and driven and propelled by the wonderful power of God. There is another passage in one of our *Upanishads* which states that the soul is revolved in the *Brahma-chakra* or the wheel of the *Brahman*. All these passages indicate a more or less similar trend of thought about the directing function of God, which is beautifully summed up in this stanza.

The Lord being supreme in the way, Srī Kṛishṇa proceeds to ask Arjuna to seek refuge at His lotus feet :

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।

तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥ ६२ ॥

62. Seek refuge with Him alone, O Arjuna, with all your heart. Through His grace, you will obtain supreme peace and (the) eternal abode.

Acting as our nature drives us to act is to guide our life along the path of least resistance, and to throw away the innumerable opportunities that life offers to us for progress to perfection. We must rise, as the poet says, on our dead selves to higher things. By throwing ourselves at the lotus feet of the Lord, we may rise above ourselves and become the masters of our *prakṛiti*. Arjuna has already been told that, by submitting to the complex of tendencies which we sum up as his nature, he will be treading the path to ruin. A crude fear of sin and a dread of the sorrow that he may feel at the slaughter of friends and relatives have plunged him into a flood of sentimental self-pity. But before long it is bound to change to a mood of martial indignation by the promptings of his *rājasa* nature. Whichever of these attitudes Arjuna adopts, he cannot be said to have exercised his sense of moral discrimination ; both these attitudes are swayed, so to say, by mere whims of fancy. If, from a sense of duty to be done, he overcomes his repugnance to the performance of an unpleasant task and discharges his office in war as a service rendered unto God, then only can he avert the ruin that stares him in the face. Every temptation overcome is a rung in the ladder to heaven and every

act of weakness is a link in the chain which binds us in *samsāra*. Here is an opportunity for Arjuna to progress on the path to final deliverance and bliss. If he gives it up, he would be strengthening the obstacles to his salvation. By seeking refuge with the Lord, he would become the recipient of divine grace, attain the peace which passeth understanding and enter into the world of indestructible immortality. The Lord is only too ready to help, but it is left us to decide whether we accept it or not. So, Śrī Kṛishṇa says:

इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद्गुह्यतरं मया ।
विमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ॥ ६३ ॥

63. Thus have I taught you (the) knowledge more mysterious than (any) mystery. After considering this fully, do as you please.

The teaching of Śrī Kṛishṇa is here declared to be more mysterious than any mystery. It is evidently meant to be conveyed thereby that what Arjuna has been taught is not to be learnt easily. It is hidden from the common vision, not because any peculiar sanctity attaches to mystery as such, but because insight into matters of spirit is necessarily rare. And by the grace of God, Arjuna had an opportunity to make use of the insight of God Himself. However, we have to note that even though it is God Himself who taught Arjuna, none the less Arjuna was left free to make his choice. To us who believe in the divinity of Śrī Kṛishṇa, here is an assurance of the freedom of the human will, coming from the lips of God Himself. Śrī Kṛishṇa, as you know well, has never adopted the attitude known as the *prabhu-sammita*. He has exercised no compulsion, save that of reason and truth. Omnipotent as God may be, He has of His own choice left it to us to make or mar ourselves. The supreme importance of right choice in moral life is significantly brought out in the exhortation to Arjuna to do as he pleases. God may not save us except with our permission.

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At almost the very end of the long discussion they indulge in, Śrī Kṛishṇa outlines clearly to Arjuna the alternatives before him. Arjuna can exercise, as we saw last week, only a restricted choice. His inherited endowments and the environment in which he is placed define the limits within which he is free. Fight he must in the war, whether he will or no. If he does not fight from a sense of duty, he is sure to fight from a sense of wounded vanity. Nature will feel outraged, if a warrior, born and bred, betakes himself to the life of mendicant asceticism, and sooner or later will have her revenge. Nevertheless, *prakṛiti* itself is controlled and guided by God ; and Arjuna will be wise to seek refuge at the lotus feet of the Lord and do His bidding that he may emancipate his soul. Śrī Kṛishṇa makes this very clear in the concluding stanzas of His great and wonderful discourse ; and these we will take up for study today.

सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयश्शृणु मे परमं वचः ।
इष्टोऽसि मे दृढ इति ततो वक्ष्यामि ते हितम् ॥ ६४ ॥

64. Listen again to My supreme word, most mysterious of all. As you are distinctly dear to me, I am speaking (for) your good.

Śrī Kṛishṇa here impresses upon Arjuna the importance of the final words He is going to utter. Arjuna has been favoured with the grace of God ; he is dear to the Lord. And as those alone can attain salvation on whom the gracious glance of the Lord falls, such persons learn the truths that transform their inner natures. When once the Lord, for whatever reason, bestows on us His grace, He steadily leads us to the highest destiny open to us, replacing our weakness with strength and removing our ignorance with the light of wisdom. Arjuna is about to learn the way of the elect, the wisdom that is the possession of those whom the Lord loves. It is not such knowledge as may be picked up readily by the wayside from all sorts and conditions of men. It is the deepest of secrets, not to be easily obtained. It is the supreme teaching of the Lord and contains within itself all that philosophy and religion have to teach us. After thus stressing the value of the

teaching, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to state it in the ensuing two stanzas. The first of these reads thus;

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥ ६५ ॥

65. Fix your mind upon Me; become devoted unto Me; worship Me; bow down unto Me. You will reach Me alone. I truly give you (this) assurance (as) you are dear to Me.

Some of you may have noted the similarity of the words and phrases of this verse with those found in the concluding stanza of the ninth chapter. The only difference lies in the second line of the stanza. Śrī Kṛishiṇa here lays emphasis on His love towards Arjuna, whereas in the ninth chapter He stressed the importance of the discipline of *bhakti*. On account of this, it has been suggested that the teaching of this verse deals, indeed, with *bhakti*, but not with the discipline known as *bhakti-yoga*, which has its own regular rules and observances. The argument may, of course, be advanced that love by its very nature knows no laws and keeps no limits and that it would be rash to enjoin that devotion to God should fare along a fixed track or flower forth into certain types of activities only. The seed of love, once it is sown, may grow into many beautiful patterns, obeying no logic save its own. Whether, therefore, we agree or disagree with the view that there is a special discipline of devotion, this verse differs from that of the ninth chapter in shifting the emphasis from the love of the devotee to God to the love of God towards the devotee. How far-reaching may be the consequences of this change is well brought out in the famous declaration of Śrī Kṛishṇa :

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥ ६६ ॥

66. Completely renouncing all *dharmas*, seek Me alone as refuge. I will release you from all sins. Do not grieve.

This justly celebrated verse has made history in the religious thought of India. It is the most widely known authority for the

doctrine of *prapatti* or complete faith in and absolute self-surrender to God. Volumes have been written upon it, and every word, every syllable, nay, even every phonetic unit in it, has been minutely scrutinised and analysed. When so much has been thought about and written, there are bound to be differences of opinion among the authoritative commentators. I shall try my best to draw your attention to these in due course.

Much controversy has centred round the significance of the word, '*dharma*', in this context. It is one of those fascinating words that grow with the growth of language and acquire a wealth of meaning and power of suggestion, at once the despair and delight of savants and students. Even in the *Gītā*, it is not used in any one sense throughout. Ordinarily, in its widest significance, it connotes the idea of duty. Let us try to see what we can understand by the call to renounce all duties and seek refuge at the lotus feet of the Lord. Analysing the concept of duty, we can see that it implies the sense of "ought". Under a certain set of circumstances, there arises a course of action which we *ought* to pursue. The authority that commands us may be external or internal. Fear of punishment or fear of ill-fame may furnish the force behind the categorical imperative. A higher stage is indicated, when men realise their duties from a sense of internal compulsion. Here again we have to distinguish carefully between the sense of duty as such and other internal impulses to action, such as love of fame or the feeling that it is good policy to be honest, or even fear of hell and desire for heaven.

Śrī Kṛishṇa's teaching on *karma-yoga* is based upon the fundamental idea that every one has his duties determined by both his endowment and environment. These duties we were asked to perform selflessly and without desire for the fruits of our actions. It may be recalled that the foundations of duty are here laid securely on the experience of self-realisation and the great law of *karma*. Carrying our analysis still further, we may trace the authority for duty in the illumining realisation of God. Kant, as you may remember, has defined religion as the representation to ourselves of the moral law as the will of God. To do one's duty therefore is the same as to carry out the will of God who speaks to us through the voice of conscience. Now, the mandates and prohibitions of conscience imply compulsion. It is as though the

voice of conscience forced us against our wills to tread the straight and narrow path. The idea of duty thus involves always the idea of a command, a peremptory injunction to do or to refrain from doing something. And it wears this aspect to us because of the double nature within us. The voice of conscience commands us with the authority of the voice of God, because every moment in our lives many unholy but siren voices invite us to the primrose path to perdition.

In this apparently never-ending struggle which we all have to wage against the powers of darkness, some seek the aid of a developed sense of duty that confers on them a stoical strength. Yet others resort to the path of *jñāna* and gain freedom from sin and selfishness through spiritual and philosophical realisation. Easiest of all, however, is the way of devotion which requires of us the culture of our tender and benevolent emotions. For the tendency to love is altogether natural and is implanted in the hearts of all. There is in fact none who has not a natural aptitude to love and be moved by love. It is enough if we make this natural sentiment expand so widely and so completely as to have God and all His creatures for its object and, in consequence of this love, place the utmost trust in Him and allow Him to use us as His tools.

Now, the feeling of *bhakti* is said to be a feeling akin to love; it is indeed deep devotion and love. Even in our daily life we may observe how love makes for selflessness. Think of a young man at the threshold of life, rich and well-to-do, spending a gay and pleasant time. He may not care to think of anything or anybody other than himself. Suppose that he marries a maiden whom he learns to love. Strolling along the market-place, he sees one day some delicious fruits. Whom will he think of first, himself or his wife? In the good old days when he was revelling in his single-blessedness, he might have bought the fruits with no idea other than that of satisfying his palate. But now he is bound by the golden fetters of love, and that makes him naturally prefer his wife's happiness to his. So he buys the fruits with the intention of presenting them to his wife. This example may help us to understand how love tends to expand our sympathies and kill our selfishness. With the conquest of selfishness, every temptation that tends to make our lives faulty and sinful disappears at once.

If we cultivate this feeling of love carefully and steadily, if it is made to find its object not merely in wife and children, but in the Supreme Lord from whom comes all that is good and true and beautiful, then through intense attachment to God there will arise in us absolute non-attachment to ourselves. If we make God the object of all our devotion, then all other lesser attachments, like our love of pleasure, of wealth, of beauty, or of power, fade away like mist before the rising sun. The only love that endures then is our love of God. And the full import of this depends, of course, on our conception of God. If we realise that everything in the universe has sprung from God and is destined in time to go back to Him again, then, when He becomes the object of our love, all His creatures also become the objects of our love, as a matter of course. When this happens, how can we any longer manage to be selfish? We cannot love sincerely the Creator and His creatures and at the same time be devoted to our mean little selves.

When our love is directed towards an object worthy of reverence, it is apt to take the form of confidence and dependence. Need it be said that the divine object of the *bhakta's* love is worthy of our fullest confidence and faith? Besides the Lord, what is there in the universe on which we can rely and depend? Indeed, the sense of dependence on a power higher than man is believed by some thinkers to be an essential feature of all religions. This feeling is, perhaps, most clearly realised, when in the face of the utmost distress or danger, man realises his own helplessness and wrings his hands in despair. It is then that one realises one's dependence on God. Consider the case of a pious and devout father whose child is lying seriously ill. The doctor who sees no chances of recovery, can only murmur: "While there is life, there is hope." In that moment of blighted hope and imminent bereavement, the father has, perhaps, the sense to pray: "O Lord, Thy will be done!" Here, indeed, is the heart of the doctrine of *prapatti* which is believed by many to be taught in this verse.

This feeling of dependence, engendered in the presence of difficulties which man feels powerless to overcome, may be extended to cover the whole of our lives and form the mainspring of our conduct. When we reflect on the contrast between our manifold imperfections and weaknesses and the greatness and glory

of the Lord, must we not deem it a privilege to be allowed even to love Him? As for His response to our love, dare we expect it? Judged from the standpoint of our fitness to be loved by God and to be granted the enduring emancipation of *moksha*, how many of us can pass the test? Were it not for the grace of God, who tempers His strict justice with overflowing mercy, we must abandon all hope and sink into abysmal despair. It is the height of foolishness to demand salvation from God as a right earned and fought for. Our only hope is to appeal to the gracious mercy of the Lord and to pray that He might overlook our faults and weaknesses in the abundance of His love. Indeed, our very weakness may induce Him to bestow on us His protecting love. The best offering of devotion and love that we can make is our sweet little self. As the poet has sung:

> Our wills are ours, we know not how,
> Our wills are ours to make them Thine.

There has been discussion among the pious and the learned on the extent to which we must develop this sense of trust and confidence in God, a theme which is not unfamiliar to Christian theology. Some hold that, like the baby monkey which clings of its own effort to its mother, we must supplement our trust in God by working ceaselessly for attaining unto Him; while others take the view that our trust in God must be as complete as that which the kitten shows in its mother by allowing itself to be carried by her hither and thither helplessly. While differing on the emphasis to be laid on the saving efficacy of the grace of God, both the schools of thought, of course, agree in stressing the importance of absolute self-surrender.

When one has so much faith and confidence in God as to pray ever and always, "Thy will be done", when one has no will save that of the Lord, then it is said that God Himself works through such an individual. It is not any sense of internal compulsion which forces him to tread the path of righteousness. Spontaneously and naturally, he is good. He divests himself even of his sense of responsibility, for the sense of responsibility dies with the death of a separate will. He gets through the work on hand from moment to moment without minding what its form is or aim or consequences. He is like a soldier. God is his general

and takes all responsibility on Himself. The discordant segments of such a devotee's personality will get fused under divine influence, and his life will gain the blissful freedom which results from the conversion of the call of duty into a habit of nature. He will be acting aright from his own nature; to him the "ought" has become the "is".

Renouncement of duties can thus be taken to mean the reposing of such trustful confidence in God as to leave it to Him to do as He pleases with us who are as but tools in His hands, to be used for whatever purpose He deems fit. Why should we worry ourselves with the delicate and difficult problem of distinguishing what is our duty from what is not? This riddle remains only so long as we feel ourselves having a will that can pick and choose. Please note, however, that freedom from the necessity of moral choice is not the same thing as indifference to the moral law. In the one case, we are swayed by God; in the other by forces most of which are base and dark. Holding God to be supreme, doing His work, wearing ourselves away in service and sacrifice, we may realise the purpose of our lives and, perhaps, earn the grace of God. No duties, then, for us, no laws, no rites. Nor any sorrow either. Arjuna is, therefore, bidden not to grieve at the consequences of war or the appalling task of wiping away the influence of his countless sins of omission and commission. If full faith is reposed in God, He will work through us and make us free and blessed.

Another interpretation of the term, '*dharma*', favoured by exponents of the doctrine of *prapatti*, is that it stands for 'the means of salvation'. According to this view, what is enjoined is that we must give up the paths of *karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna* and look upon the Lord Himself as both *upāya* and *upeya*, the means and the end of salvation. Two important ideas underlie this view. Firstly, it is the grace of God alone that confers on us the great gift of salvation. Our faults and imperfections are so many and our power so small that nothing but the gracious mercy of the Lord can save us. Vāch says in a *sūkta* of the *Ṛigveda* (X. 124): "Him whom I love, I make him terrible, I make him my priest, I make him a *ṛishi*, I make him wise." Says a famous passage in the *Kaṭhopanishad* (I. 2. 23): "This Self is not reached by reflection, or by steady meditation, or by extensively hearing (the

scriptures). Whomsoever He chooses, by him alone is He reached. To him, this Self reveals His own form." Only he can attain God, whom God elects. Here is the explanation for the many ways in which the flower of spiritual greatness buds and blossoms. The spirit bloweth where it listeth. When conscious efforts at attaining perfection may not bear fruit, at odd corners and in strange ways, men of light and leading rise up. And it is surely impertinent to investigate the guiding motives of God in bestowing His grace. Not till our wisdom is greater than that of God may we hope to do so with any promise of success. Is it not, therefore, abundantly clear that our wisest course is humbly to seek refuge at the lotus feet of the Lord, leaving our fate to be decided by His mercy and wisdom? This is the logic underlying the teaching of *śaraṇāgati* (refuge-seeking), which is another name for *prapatti*.

The nature of *prapatti* is clearly stated in the definition: *bhagavat-pravṛitti-virodhi-svapravṛitti-nivṛitti*. This may be freely rendered as abstinence from such actions as are opposed to the plan and purpose of God in governing the universe. You may remember the simile of the engine, which I placed before you, when we were discussing the question of the limits of moral choice, which arose during the course of our study of the eleventh chapter. The universe, I then ventured to suggest, may be looked upon as a mighty engine, guided and directed by God; we are all called upon to relate ourselves thereto. We may try either to obstruct the working of the machine or to co-operate with it. Our power being infinitesimal, no harm can result to the machine by our obstructive tactics. It will carry out its appointed work, relentlessly crushing us, if we stand in the way. By co-operating with the machine, we will be really helping ourselves. The *prapanna* is one who has dedicated himself to the service of God and has made himself a mere cog in the machine. His life is one continuous succession of acts of service rendered to God. Giving up *ahaṅkāra* and *mamakāra*, he realises that he has no independent status in life. For food and clothing, for home and shelter, for everything, in fact, he feels his dependence on God. He has such overwhelming faith in God that he believes that God will always do the right thing at the right moment.

This deep confidence is sometimes compared to that displayed by Draupadī at a critical moment in her life. You all know that

at the conclusion of the great gambling match which Yudhishṭhira lost, Duśśāsana sent for Draupadī and attempted to disrobe her before an assemblage of princes and nobles. The five Pāṇḍava Princes stood there, powerless to prevent this outrage, bound by their own sense of honour. None else in that vast assembly ventured to restrain the arrogant Kaurava who was transgressing all limits of decency and decorum. For a time, the hapless Draupadī strove to guard her honour with her frail and delicate hands. But all the while, the end seemed inevitable, her disgrace a calamity not to be averted. Finally, bereft of all hope, she sought God as the sole refuge. Abandoning all sense of shame, caring nought for what might happen to her, she gave up even the weak opposition that she was offering to Duśśāsana, and raised both her hands in supplication to the Lord. It is related in the *Mahābhārata* that the moment she submitted herself wholly to the divine will, the Lord came to her rescue and clothed her in a thousand marvellous robes. Duśśāsana found himself engaged in an endless task and covered himself with the shame and scorn which he had intended for Draupadī. Now, it has been suggested that our self-abandonment, our confidence in and submission to the Lord, must be as complete as Draupadī's at that momentous juncture in her life. That in brief is *prapatti*, and then alone will the Lord assume any responsibility for us.

The second essential feature of *prapatti* is the belief that God must be looked upon as both the end and means of salvation. The attainment of God is the end of all aspirants. But a *prapanna* differs from others in praying that God alone should deliver him from the toils of *saṁsāra*, when and as He pleases. It is noteworthy that there is not the slightest tinge of selfishness in his life and conduct. Every one who leads a life of purity and selflessness may be accused of the calculated selfishness of sacrificing a smaller good for a greater. Even this petulant charge fails with the *prapanna*, who leaves it to God to dispose of him as He pleases. It has, indeed, been argued by some that even *prapatti* should not be resorted to as a means of salvation, but as an end in itself. Absolute submission to the will of the Lord is, if we may say so, the only befitting characteristic of the soul. To seek refuge at the feet of God with any object whatever, even with the object of attaining salvation, is to degrade spiritual communion to the level of a commercial transaction.

The least taint of a desire for some reward in return for service rendered or the smallest suggestion of self-effort undermines the very foundations of *prapatti*. An incident from the *Rāmāyaṇa* is sometimes cited in illustration. Hanumān, as you are aware, could only be bound by the *brahmāstra*, and that, too, only for a specific period. When Hanumān gave battle to the *Rākshasa* hosts after seeing Sītā in Laṅkā, Indrajit bound him by the *brahmāstra*. But his followers, mistrusting the efficacy of the *brahmāstra* and as a measure of additional precaution, tied Hanumān also with ropes. But the magic weapon would tolerate no crude rival, and it is related that at the first touch of the rope, the bonds of the *brahmāstra* gave way of themselves. Even like the *brahmāstra*, *prapatti* can brook no rival near the throne. *Prapatti* is a jealous mistress and will tolerate the co-existence of no other attitude towards God. Any self-effort or desire for fruit stultifies *prapatti*, which can mean nothing other than unbounded faith in and absolue self-surrender to God. We are now in a position to grasp the significance of the six ingredients of *prapatti*, which the *Lakshmī-tantra* mentions—the practice of that which is good, the avoidance of that which is evil, a strong faith that God alone is the deliverer, earnest prayer to God for protection, the entire entrusting of one's soul to the disposal of God and the realisation of one's own littleness.

According to Rāmānujāchārya, the term, '*dharma*', may mean either the fruits of the disciplines of *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* or the expiatory rites enjoined for wiping away our past sins in order to fit us for the practice of *bhakti-yoga*. In the former case, the verse may be understood to teach that we must practise *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* without any desire for salvation as such. For even the desire for emancipation is in the last resort a selfish desire. In the latter case, seeking refuge at the feet of God is regarded as a substitute for various expiatory ceremonies and rites. From this it is an easy step to take the view that *śaraṇāgati* is a substitute for all kinds of rites whatsoever and for all efforts after perfection of the self. That Śrī Rāmānuja was not unaware of the saving power of self-surrender comes out clearly from that beautiful and moving prayer of his, which goes by the name of *Śaraṇāgati-gadya*. Therein, oppressed by the weight of his countless sins of commission and omission, he throws himself entirely at the mercy of the Lord, and represents himself to have

received an assurance from the Lord to the effect that, out of the abundance of His love, He has forgiven those faults and will receive the suppliant to His bosom in due course.

Śaṅkarāchārya observes that Śrī Kṛishṇa teaches in this verse the right vision which is the fruit of the successful pursuit of *karma-yoga* and which constitutes the essence of the *Vedānta*. By the term, '*dharma*', he appears to understand religious rites in general. All religious rites, performed as they are for some kind of fruit, have a binding tendency. When the performance of *dharmas* is forbidden, Śaṅkarāchārya goes on to observe, the performance of *adharmas* is also by implication prohibited. In other words, abstinence from all actions is taught here. We are asked to live that life of wisdom which has arisen above the categories of good and evil.

Madhvāchārya observes that the *dharma-tyāga* that is enjoined cannot be anything other than *phala-tyāga*, for we cannot otherwise explain the subsequent command to fight. And he quotes in support the line which declares that he is called a *tyāgin* who abandons the fruits of his actions (XVIII. 11). By the term, '*sarva-dharmān*', has also been understood all *dharmas* contrary to *śaraṇāgati*, the worship of other gods and expiatory rites for errors committed in the observance of *bhakti-yoga*. Yet another view construes the *śloka* thus: If you give up all *dharmas*, then, for expiation, seek Me as refuge. It has also been suggested that the teaching of the *śloka* must be applied only to those who, like the Śūdras, have no *dharmas* prescribed for them in the *śāstras*. It is, however, difficult to see how, on such views as these, we can explain the active commandment to abandon completely all *dharmas*.

Many more interpretations doubtless exist, but I trust I have placed before you enough to indicate the great importance which this *śloka* has assumed in the religious thought of India. It has been described as the *charama-śloka*, which may be considered to be equivalent to the English phrase, "last word". It is, indeed, the last word of Śrī Kṛishṇa on religion and philosophy, both literally (so far as the *Gītā* is concerned) and figuratively. I hope you have seen how this teaching arises naturally out of the trend of the thoughts that precede it and how it summarises and contains

within itself all the highest conclusions of religion and philosophy. To one who has complete faith and confidence in God, who surrenders his will and divests himself even of the sense of responsibility, there remains no compulsion of duty. Spontaneously, his life orders itself so as to be in harmony with the plan and purpose of God. In fact, God Himself works through him. Such in brief is the import of this teaching. And with these words, I beg your permission to conclude here our work for the day.

lxxxv

With the sixty-sixth stanza of the eighteenth chapter, which we tried to study during our last class, the teaching of the *Gītā* naturally concludes. But there remain a few verses which are of the nature of what is known in Sanskrit literary convention as *phala-śruti*, praise of the work that has been studied, and a few others which round up the memorable dialogue by way of an epilogue. And these we shall take up for consideration to-day.

इदं ते नातपस्काय नाभक्ताय कदाचन ।
न चाशुश्रूषवे वाच्यं न च मां योऽभ्यसूयति ॥ ६७ ॥

67. Never should this be told by you to one who has not practised austerity, nor to one who is devoid of devotion, nor to one who is lacking in attention, nor to one who calumniates Me.

This stanza raises an interesting question, at which we have glanced more than once (Cf. Vol. I. p. 318). Some of you may ask whether this injunction of Śrī Kṛishṇa does not tend to confine His teaching to a privileged few and deny it to those who are most in need of it. That is a legitimate question to ask, and in answering it we have to take note of the spirit of the whole of the *Gītā*. Tender concern for the weaknesses of man has been one of the prominent features of Śrī Kṛishṇa's teachings, and we cannot ignore it in the present context. At the same time, we have also to bear in mind the fact that the value of religions and philosophies is dependent on two factors—upon the proportion of realised truth and wisdom which is contained in them, as well as upon their fitness and suitability to the individual or community who is

asked to adopt them. Even the founder of Christianity which is claimed by its followers to be a universal religion of love and brotherhood, exclaimed : " Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their foot and turn again and rend you." Religion and ethics deal with personal and social life, and when they are misapprehended, they may add terribly to the sum total of human misery. An ancient Latin poet sang: O Religion, what crimes are committed in thy name ! Religion unleashes strong forces, powerful alike for good or evil. And when religion is misunderstood, incalculable harm ensues. The history of religious persecution is written in blood across the pages of the history of the world. And as modern psychology has pointed out, there is as much material for pathology as for hagiology in the lives of mystics.

Religious teachers have to be cautious and circumspect in propagating their teachings. They have to study their audience before starting their evangel. Hinduism has had to face this problem from the beginnings of history. It has had to make its way amidst a people, marked by amazing variations in culture and religious belief. There are unfriendly critics who declare that Hinduism is not a religion, but a jumble of incongruous creeds. We know, of course, that this is not so, that there is a definite ideal to which Hinduism is offering homage. There is a *Vedāntic* ideal which has been influencing the varied compartmental groups into which Hindu society has been divided. And in propagating this ideal, Hinduism has proceeded on the basis that the pupil must be as fit to receive as the teacher to teach. It has attempted to lead men and women within its fold or wandering on its borders gradually and almost unconsciously from lower to higher phases of religious life. That Hinduism is doing this kind of work even to-day has been borne witness to by many Western students of our religion. And it may not be amiss to remark that in a world which has contracted by modern methods of communication and which has been closely knit by the development of international trade, the example set by Hinduism is of no little value.

We must try to understand the injunction given in this *Śloka* in the light of all that Śrī Kṛishṇa has taught us so far, and we must not fail to give due weight to the spirit of comprehensive

charity and all-inclusive toleration which has illuminated the *Gītā*. If we do so, it will become clear to us that the intention of this *śloka* is not to evolve an esoteric cult from the religion and philosophy of the *Gītā*. The advice given is a counsel of prudence and common-sense, which teachers of religion can only ignore at their peril. Please mark carefully the characteristics of those from whom the lessons of the *Gītā* are to be withheld. Firstly, those who are lacking in self-discipline are mentioned. As you are aware, moral progress in the history of civilised communities all over the world has largely consisted in replacing external restraints on undesirable and anti-social forms of behaviour by internal checks. The fact that we still need penal codes shows that we are far from the goal. Popular religion with its mythology of heaven and hell has not yet advanced beyond the stage of regulating conduct by the stimulus of fear of infernal punishment on the one hand and of greed for celestial bliss on the other. Indeed, there are those who maintain that it is good policy to foster this kind of religious sentiment, as it tends to maintain social stability.

Now, if we go and tell people who have been governing their moral lives by fear of the penal code or fear of hell that they need obey none save their own conscience, they may misunderstand us calamitously. No one unaccustomed to self-control is fit to be entrusted with the responsibility of self-guidance in the matter of his conduct in life. The sudden adoption of a higher form of religion by those who have been accustomed to lower ones is thus fraught with grave danger. Again, those who are lacking in devotion cannot profit much by the recommendation to live a life dedicated to the service of God, which constitutes perhaps the central teaching of the *Gītā*. There is no use again in teaching people who do not wish to hear. It is like scattering seed on barren rock. Not only will they fail to understand, but also there is the dangerous probability that they may misunderstand. And in the case of those who are prejudiced from the beginning and are envious of the great teachers of religion, there is a reasonable certainty that the truths of religion placed before them will be perversely misapprehended, and in consequence, vulgarised.

There is thus a great responsibility placed on teachers of religion. They cannot lightly withhold light from those who are toiling in darkness. At the same time, they have to satisfy

themselves that their teachings are not vulgarised or distorted by those to whom they are taught. It is probably with the intention of drawing attention to this that Śrī Kṛishṇa thought it fit to give this injunction to Arjuna. You may ask: What exactly is the duty of teachers of religion in regard to those whom they deem unfit to receive their teachings? It cannot be that they are to have no concern whatever with the spiritual welfare of such persons. In all probability, they are expected to make those who are unfit, fit in the first instance. The history of Hinduism shows with what magnificent success this policy can be pursued.

य इदं परमं गुह्यं मद्भक्तेष्वभिधास्यति ।
भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा मामेवैष्यत्यसंशयम् ॥ ६८ ॥

न च तस्मान्मनुष्येषु कश्चिन्मे प्रियकृत्तमः ।
भविता न च मे तस्मादन्यः प्रियतरो भुवि ॥ ६९ ॥

68. He who, displaying supreme devotion towards Me, teaches this highest mystery to My devotees, shall attain Me without doubt.

69. Nor is there anyone among men, who can do anything more pleasing to Me, nor will there be another on earth, dearer to Me than he.

Here is shown another aspect of the responsibility which is imposed on teachers of religion. They are here expressly bidden to spread the light among those who may need it, and who are not likely to be dazzled or inconvenienced by it on account of their unfitness to receive. It is their mission to propagate the gospel. Nothing is dearer to God than the work of directing men towards the light of wisdom. No one can be dearer than those who are engaged in this holy endeavour. You will note that the teaching is to be spread among the devotees of God. That is the primary qualification which indicates fitness to benefit by this holy teaching. And it must be presumed to imply by itself the absence of those undesirable qualities which we were considering a few minutes ago. That this is so must be obvious to any one who has studied to any purpose the characteristics of *bhakti* as described in the *Gītā*.

In the same strain, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to praise and bless those who study the memorable dialogue of the *Gītā*.

अध्येष्यते च य इमं धर्म्यं संवादमावयोः ।
ज्ञानयज्ञेन तेनाहमिष्टः स्यामिति मे मतिः ॥ ७० ॥

श्रद्धावाननसूयश्च शृणुयादपि यो नरः ।
सोऽपि मुक्तः शुभांल्लोकान्प्राप्नुयात्पुण्यकर्मणाम् ॥ ७१ ॥

70. It is My conviction that I shall have been worshipped through the sacrifice of knowledge by him who will study this righteous dialogue between us.

71. And even the man who listens to it with faith and without envy, shall reach the auspicious regions of those who have lived righteously, having emancipated himself.

You may remember that, in the course of our study of the ninth chapter, we came across the expression, '*jñāna-yajña*' (IX. 15.). I remember to have suggested then that we have to understand by the term the institution of sacrifice as viewed in the light of the wisdom of the man of wisdom. And this implies, as we saw then, that the man of wisdom who worships God through *jñāna-yajña* identifies all rituals with God who becomes for him both the end and the means of all religious effort. The study of the *Gītā* is intended to develop this attitude, and it is, therefore, quite appropriate to describe it as the worship of God through the sacrifice of knowledge. The study, of course, must be a study in the best sense of the term. Bacon has an epigram distinguishing what he calls digesting of books from merely browsing through them. The *Gītā* is a book to be read, re-read, pondered over and acted upon. And even as we were called upon to endow the term, '*jñāna*', with a volitional significance in Chapter XIII, we must construe study in this context to mean study finding its fulfilment in action. In other words, reverent study of the *Gītā* will teach us all that we need to know of God and of the manner in which we ought to relate ourselves to Him ; and it is a necessary corollary to our study that we should make it flower forth into action of the right sort.

Even the man who listens to the *Gītā* with faith and without envy is here promised the happy regions of those who perform good deeds. It may, therefore, be presumed that listening to the *Gītā* is considered to be capable of giving rise to *puṇya*. It is noteworthy, however, that the salvation of soul-emancipation and God-attainment is not promised to those who merely listen to the *Gītā*. Śrī Rāmānujā in his commentary goes indeed so far as to suggest that the term, '*loka*', means nothing more than host or collection. That is, those who listen to the *Gītā* are promised the company of hosts of good men and true. Whatever view we may prefer to take, it is well to note that Śrī Kṛishṇa must not be understood here to teach that mere listening to an exposition of sound morality or studying the scripture can be a substitute for the right kind of conduct, which alone can emancipate us from the bonds of *karma* and lead us on to salvation.

Having finished what He intended to say, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to enquire whether His teaching has borne fruit.

कच्चिदेतच्छ्रुतं पार्थ त्वयैकाग्रेण चेतसा ।
कच्चिदज्ञानसम्मोहः प्रणष्टस्ते धनञ्जय ॥ ७२ ॥

72. Has this been heard by you, O Arjuna, with one-pointed attention? Has your delusion, born of ignorance, been destroyed?

Note once again the remarkable manner in which Śrī Kṛishṇa emphasises that the final decision to fight or to retire from the battle-field rests with Arjuna and Arjuna alone. There is no attempt to order Arjuna about and dictate his opinions. Śrī Kṛishṇa is playing the role of the ideal teacher whose duty it is to put his disciples in the right whenever they are in the wrong, but never to compel them to subordinate the verdict of their reason to mere tradition or authority. Śaṅkarāchārya, in commenting on this verse, observes that Śrī Kṛishṇa had by no means exhausted all His resources in persuasion; if doubts still persisted, He was quite ready to combat them. The ideal teacher would be failing in his duty, if he did not reason his disciples out of their erroneous views on any matter. The credentials of reason

may not be questioned; the ultimate responsibility of the individual to make the choice that morality requires cannot be shared by others. Short of this, however, persuasion is legitimate and indeed obligatory upon all who find themselves face to face with error or delusion. It is noteworthy that the last *śloka* which Śrī Kṛishṇa speaks in the *Gītā* emphasises the obligation of the teacher to spread right opinions and the responsibility of the disciple to form his own views.

अर्जुन उवाच—

नष्टो मोहस्स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाऽच्युत ।
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥ ७३ ॥

ARJUNA SAID:

73. Gone is my delusion. Memory has come back to me, O Krishṇa, through Your grace. I stand free from doubt. I will act according to Your word.

You may remember what Arjuna said at the beginning. He confessed that his mind was clouded in respect of the duty to be done, and that his whole nature was impaired by the fault of weakness in will and heart (II. 7). He no longer felt sure of himself, he felt himself lost in a situation in which his soul was rent in twain. Having undertaken the duty of war, he found himself facing respected friends and kinsmen bound to him by close ties of blood. A wave of repulsion to the task on hand overcame him, and he threw away his bow and arrows. Not for him the sovereignty of the three worlds, if it had to be attained through the slaughter of friends and kinsmen. He did not want to wade knee-deep in blood to ascend a throne. He foresaw too the wide-spread social disorder that a war of the magnitude about to be fought was bound to create, and he had no desire to assume responsibility therefor. In treachery to friends and relatives, the evil-minded sons of Dhṛitarāshṭra might have seen no sin, and they might be heedless of the horrors of war. Was it not incumbent on Arjuna who felt these things, to retire from the battle before it was too late? Would not participation in war brand him with the sin of deliberate wrong-doing?

In assuming this attitude, Arjuna displayed mental confusion. Troubled by a conflict of duties, he failed to see his way out of a difficult situation. He also did not understand himself properly. He did not realise that all his high-sounding reasons for retiring from the war were in reality the result of disguised selfishness and unreasoning fear of sin. After following the teachings of Śrī Kṛishṇa so far, Arjuna says that the delusion that clouded his intellect has vanished. He now stands free from doubt, and sees his way clearly before him. And above all, he has got back his *smṛiti*, he is himself again. The expression, '*smṛiti*', generally stands for memory. Śrī Śaṅkara points out that Arjuna has recollected the true nature of his self and realised its identity with the Supreme *Brahman*. The Self, in inexplicable conjunction with *māyā*, has, so to speak, forgotten Itself and appears as the differentiated universe. With the rise of true knowledge, memory comes back to the soul, and the bonds that bind it to the world are broken. Śrī Rāmānuja interprets '*smṛiti*' in the more general sense of 'knowledge of truth'. Arjuna is now in a position to perceive the truth about himself and his relations with the universe and with God. The point to note is this. Arjuna was for some time past under the spell of a delusion. Now, that delusion is gone, and he has recovered his poise and balance. He has learnt what he has to do under the circumstances. The duties that have been determined for him by his endowment and environment have been realised by him. He no longer thinks that he is other than what he is, that he can lead a life of mendicant asceticism against which sooner or later his whole nature would rise in revolt.

Free from doubt and delusion, Arjuna recognises that the only course open to him is to carry out the bidding of Śrī Kṛishṇa. We will do well to keep this clearly before our minds. Western critics have seen in the *Gītā* only a medley of ideas. Nothing answers this criticism so successfully as Śrī Kṛishṇa's repeated instructions to Arjuna to remember his duty and fight. Every argument ends with the appeal to fight. Despite all digression, the main purpose of the dialogue is never lost from sight. It is this which gives the *Gītā* its unity and directs the development of its thought. Śrī Kṛishṇa's teachings end, not in an academic conclusion, but in practical action.

We are now very near the end of our long pilgrimage. The debate between Śrī Kṛishṇa and Arjuna, the ideal Teacher and the

ideal disciple, is over. Sañjaya who related the whole discussion to Dhṛitarāshṭra now begins an appropriate epilogue.

सञ्जय उवाच—

इत्यहं वासुदेवस्य पार्थस्य च महात्मनः ।
संवादमिममश्रौषमद्भुतं रोमहर्षणम् ॥ ७४ ॥

व्यासप्रसादाच्छ्रुतवानेतद् गुह्यमहं परम् ।
योगं योगेश्वरात्कृष्णात्साक्षात्कथयतस्स्वयम् ॥ ७५ ॥

SAÑJAYA SAID :

74. Thus have I heard this wonderful and thrilling dialogue between Śrī Krishṇa and the high-souled Arjuna.

75. By the favour of Vyāsa did I hear this supreme secret, the *yoga* taught by Śrī Krishṇa, the Lord of *yoga* Himself in person.

You may remember that the *Gītā* is given in the *Mahābhārata* in the form in which Sañjaya is conceived to have narrated it to Dhṛitarāshṭra (*vide* Vol. I. p. 4). Before the war begins, the sage Vyāsa asks Dhṛitarāshṭra if he would have his blind eyes opened, so that he may see for himself the course of events on the battle-field. The aged King declines the proffered gift, having no desire to watch the slaughter of his kindred. But he expresses a desire to hear full and accurate reports about the progress of the war. Accordingly, Sañjaya is granted by Vyāsa the power of supra-normal vision by means of which he comes to know all things, whether open or secret, whether taking place during the day or during the night. Not even things only thought of in the mind are to be concealed from him. It is in this manner that Sañjaya relates the thrilling dialogue between Śrī Krishṇa and Arjuna to Dhṛitarāshṭra, and from the nature of the gift bestowed on Sañjaya, it may be presumed that the actual language of the discussion has been accurately reproduced. But, as I ventured to point out to you on a former occasion, it does not matter for our immediate purpose to whom we choose to attribute the language of the *Gītā*. Suffice it to know that the teachings of the *Gītā* are

fully worthy of the divine wisdom and knowledge of truth, which, we believe, were possessed by Śrī Kṛishṇa.

राजन्संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य संवादमिममद्भुतम् ।
केशवार्जुनयोः पुण्यं हृष्यामि च मुहुर्मुहुः ॥ ७६ ॥

तच्च संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य रूपमत्यद्भुतं हरेः ।
विस्मयो मे महान् राजन् हृष्यामि च मुहुर्मुहुः ॥ ७७ ॥

76. O King, remembering over and over again this wonderful and holy dialogue between Śrī Kṛishṇa and Arjuna, I rejoice again and again.

77. And remembering again and again that most marvellous form of Śrī Krishṇa, great is my astonishment, O King, and I rejoice again and again.

Notice the reactions of Sañjaya to the *Gītā*. He describes it as wonderful and holy, and that is what precisely all of us feel when we get the good fortune of making our acquaintance with the poem. It is wonderful because of the unique synthesis it has effected amongst conflicting ideals and systems of thought. How far-reaching is the sweep of that synthesis may be discerned as much from the fact that the history of Indian civilisation has developed along the lines indicated in the *Gītā* as by the inspiration that the sacred poem offers to all genuine seekers after truth even to-day, in spite of the many revolutionary changes that have altered almost out of recognition the intellectual landscape. Rarely does it fall to the lot of any one to effect such a synthesis and exercise such influence in the history of human thought. Though Sañjaya could not have foreseen the triumphal march of the *Gītā* down the ages, he was sufficiently wise to recognise that he had the privilege of hearing some of the wisest words that ever were uttered. In the first flush of his delighted surprise, he could do nothing but—so to speak—gloat over his experience. He went over the dialogue again and again in his mind; he recalled as much of the astounding vision of *viśvarūpa* as he could. And always his unforgettable experience moved him to surprise and joy.

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।
तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ॥ ७८ ॥

78. Wherever there is Śrī Krishṇa, the Lord of *yoga,* and Arjuna, wielding his bow, there, it is my conviction, will be fortune, victory, prosperity and enduring righteousness.

Bringing himself back to the realities of the situation, Sañjaya gives a plain hint to the old King about the chances of war. Dhṛitarāshṭra's sons never could hope to succeed, he says in effect, against the combination of divine wisdom and martial genius represented by Śrī Kṛishṇa and Arjuna Notice that he refers to Arjuna as *dhanurdhara,* wielding the bow. You are sure to remember the statement made in the first chapter of the *Gītā*, that Arjuna cast away his bow and arrows and sank down on the seat of his chariot (I. 47). It is a different Arjuna that we are asked to picture here. No longer depressed by overwhelming grief, no longer weak in will and heart, but with doubts dispelled and resolute of mind, Arjuna has taken up his bow again, with the care-free confidence of a crusader in a great cause. He has followed up his promise to do Śrī Kṛishṇa's bidding by taking up his arms in real earnest. That, indeed, was the primary object of Śrī Kṛishṇa's discussion with Arjuna, and with Sañjaya's report about the successful accomplishment of this object, the *Gītā* reaches its formal conclusion.

Allow me now to make a brief survey of the teachings of the eighteenth chapter. It begins as you know with the question of Arjuna about the nature of *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*. As I suggested to you then, the eighteenth chapter takes up the thread of argument where the sixteenth left it. If the *Śāstras* are our authoritative guide to conduct, Arjuna asks in effect, why is it that their recommendation to win liberation through *sānnyāsa* and *tyāga* does not receive Śrī Kṛishṇa's approval in his case? In answer Śrī Kṛishṇa clearly explains what He understands by these terms, and why He rejects passive inaction as an honourable or indeed a possible ideal. By '*sannyāsa*', He understands the giving up of all actions prompted by desire, and by '*tyāga*' the

renunciation of the fruit of all actions in which one engages. Then, further to impress on Arjuna the necessity for giving up all attachment to one's work, Śrī Kṛishṇa analyses the concept of action and points out that the successful fruition of an action depends upon five factors, of which the agent constitutes only one. The motive with which action is done, the agent and the act are then classified under the categories of *sāttvikā*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*. The classification is further continued in respect of intelligence, will and pleasure.

In dealing with all this, Śrī Kṛishṇa takes care to emphasise that the best kind of life that men can lead is one of duties done without attachment to their fruits. In order to enable men to determine the nature of their duties, He proceeds to set out the functions of the four castes, Brahmins, Kshattriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras, in accordance with their qualities. Every one, by understanding the nature of his temperament, can find out his true function in life, and by carrying out the duties that fall to his lot in a dispassionate spirit, attain the highest. In doing our duties in the right spirit, we are worshipping God. The best means for the development of the spirit of detachment is devotion to God. When this devotion becomes supreme, we actually realise that the performance of our duties is service rendered unto God. And relying on His grace, we may overcome all difficulties and win final release for ourselves. Arjuna is then bidden to see what his duty is, as determined by his endowment and environment, and do it in a dedicated spirit. Those who think that they are the agents of what they do, fail to realise the part played by the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* and the divine spark within us in moving us to action. If only we care to throw ourselves at the feet of God, with full confidence in His grace, leaving ourselves to be disposed of as He pleases, we shall be saved from doubt and sin and *saṃsāra*.

Summing up the eighteenth chapter, Yāmunāchārya writes in the *Gītārtha-saṅgraha* :

ईश्वरे कर्तृताबुद्धिस्सत्त्वोपादेयतान्तिमे ।
स्वकर्मपरिणामश्च शास्त्रसारार्थ ईरितः ॥

In the last chapter are taught (the necessity) for attributing the agency of one's actions to God, the desirability of adopting the

sattva-guṇa, the transformation of (the performance of) one's duties (into worship of God) and the essence of the *śāstra*.

We have already discussed these topics in the course of our study of the chapter. I may, however, point out that though all agree in holding that the essence of the *śāstra* is taught in the eighteenth chapter and the importance of the celebrated sixty-sixth verse is generally recognised, there is sharp difference of opinion as to what this 'essence of the *śāstra*' is. According to Śaṅkarāchārya, it is *jñāna*; he has argued at length, by way of preface to his commentary on the 67th verse, that the *Gītā* teaches the doctrine of salvation through knowledge. Rāmānujāchārya, however, is clearly of opinion that the essence of the *śāstra* is *bhakti*. Such diversity of interpretation, however, does not diminish the value of the *Gītā* as a guide to conduct. It merely shows, as I have often pointed out to you, that there are many roads leading to the City of God.

Before I conclude our work for to-day, may I point out that the study of the *Gītā* which we began about two years ago, is now about to be concluded? It is desirable, I think, that we should spend another hour or two in trying to recapitulate what we have learnt and to put the teachings of the *Gītā* in an orderly sequence. When that work is done, we shall have in a way concluded our study of the *Gītā*. Indeed, I need not say that it is neither a very original nor a completely exhaustive study of the *Gītā*. And it would be foolish to think that we can easily master the teachings of the *Gītā*, however carefully we may study them. But I do hope that these classes may have induced many of you to seek guidance and consolation in the marvellous and memorable dialogue between Śrī Kṛishṇa and Arjuna. Gentlemen, I feel deeply grateful to you for the patience with which you have attended these classes, week after week, for nearly two years. May I hope that you will extend to me the same courtesy for another week or two, and that when we part in the end, we shall bid farewell to one another as fellow-students who have gathered together often in a united endeavour to learn from the wisdom of Śrī Kṛishṇa?

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Now that we have in a manner completed the study of the text of the *Gītā*, I propose to-day to draw your attention to the thread of argument running through all the eighteen chapters. That there is in the *Gītā* such a thread of continuous argument, a connected sequence of thought and reasoning, you must have made out by now. The *Gītā* is not, of course, a set treatise, and may not pursue a rigorously logical course. The development of thought in it proceeds after the manner of dialogues. Once we allow for this, I submit, there is no inconsistency or incongruity marring the harmony or the symmetry of the teachings of the *Gītā*.

The poem begins, as you know, with Arjuna's despair and despondency. He argues that killing by itself is a sinful action, and that he will be stained with sin by killing the Kauravas, even though they may be *ātatāyins*, death-worthy felons. Duryodhana and his friends do not realise this, and are setting out on a wicked adventure light-heartedly. Realising the rights and wrongs of the wholesale slaughter of war, it will be doubly sinful for him to engage himself in battle. And all this murder of kinsfolk and friends and preceptors—to what ultimate purpose in the end? Victory and wealth obtained through the destruction of friends and relatives are surely not worth having. And a war of the magnitude about to be fought will leave in its wake wide-spread social confusion and may lead to racial deterioration.

Śrī Kṛishṇa sees through Arjuna's high-flown arguments to his root-objection to fight. Arjuna's objection, Śrī Kṛishṇa understands, is not so much to killing as such—he has fought in far too many wars; he is anxious to avoid only killing his kinsmen and friends and preceptors. And so Śrī Kṛishṇa tries to meet Arjuna's objections first by pointing out that death is not so final and ultimate a fact as it appears at first sight. What is real and essential in Arjuna and his friends and kinsmen is immortal and immutable. The soul can neither slay nor be slain. The association of the soul with the body subjects it to grave limitations, and this association is brought about by the influence of *karma*, which is caused as well as maintained by attachment to the objects of the senses and the results of work. If there is no attachment in

relation to these, the bonds of *karma* are loosened and the soul becomes free. The practice of this non-attachment requires absolute unselfishness, strenuous endeavour and great concentration of mind in the performance of work.

All duty has for this purpose to be done for its own sake. Men have the title to the doing of duty and not to the fruits thereof. Work in itself is incapable of producing *karma*. It is the disposition of mind with which work is done, which creates for us this bondage. And so the power to command the appropriate unselfish disposition enables one to live a life which will lead on to the goal of salvation. The seer of steady wisdom who strives to reach this goal, realises the transcendental glory of self-realisation and for that purpose tries to subjugate his senses. The senses can be conquered only by killing the internal relish for pleasures and not by external sense-starvation. So the seer has to practise the *yoga* of meditation and mental concentration, having God as the one and only object of devotion. Thus, his mind will become pure and steady and help him to reconcile both active achievement and hearty renunciation in his own life. This life of unattached and unworldly endeavour is representative of that divine philosophic wisdom where there is no room for either the delusion of interested worldliness or of a similar other-worldliness.

At this stage, Arjuna asks: If the disposition with which work is done is more important than the nature of the work, why does Śrī Kṛishṇa ask him to do work which is cruel? He is obviously under the impression that by making the motive unattached and unselfish, one can easily reach the goal of salvation, whether the life lived happens to be one of work or of no-work, and whatever may be the nature of the work. Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to reply that there is an inviolable rule of choice in regard to the work which men have to do in life. Only that work happens to be our duty, the doing of which has become incumbent upon us. We cannot judge the conduct of men either from the standpoint of motive alone or from the standpoint of action alone. It is impossible for any embodied being to live the life of absolute inaction, for the very *prakṛiti* of his embodiment compels him to live a life of work. We cannot, therefore, escape from the necessity of work. We can only try to make the life of work itself succeed in overcoming and exhausting the *saṁskāra* of *karma*. In

order to enable men to live such a life, Śrī Kṛishṇa places before Arjuna the means whereby men may train themselves in selflessness. So He lays down that all work which is other than what is intended for a sacrifice, tends to subject people to the bondage of *karma*.

Accordingly, to attain the state of *naishkarmya*, one must make one's life subserve the ends of a great sacrifice by completely dedicating it with all its endeavours and all its results to God. Even he who begins to worship God through mere self-love is sure to free himself in due course from selfishness. A fruitful course of strenuous life is by no means incompatible with self-realisation or God-realisation. If a man has reached the stage where he has no selfish ends to accomplish, he need not give up a life of active endeavour, but on the other hand he may try to lead a life of unselfish work, like Janaka and others who understood devotion to the service of man as being equivalent to devotion to God Himself. The life of work is not only a means of salvation to the unselfish sage, but is also an example of worthy guidance to the world. God Himself, when incarnate on earth, has to live the life of work, if through His incarnation the world is to be saved. Between the sage who takes work to be worship, and the common man, there is a difference. The latter fails to realise that the immediate propeller of all work is *prakṛiti* and the ultimate source of all power for the performance of all work is God. It is only by dedicating our lives entirely to God that we can work and yet be free from sin. Work and the appropriate mental disposition are thus both of value.

At this stage, Arjuna asks: Why should men be blamed for sin, if they are under the settled guidance of the forces of Nature? Śrī Kṛishṇa replies that sin arises when men mistake their vocation or consciously or otherwise overstep the bounds of the requisitions of Nature. It is through inordinate and unnatural desire that men sin. By the culture and invigoration of the enlightened will, we must learn to restrain such unnatural desire, and it is only when one has succeeded in this endeavour that one becomes fit to live that life which may be wholly dedicated unto God. Such a person, while sincerely attributing the agency of all that he does to God Himself, to whom alone in reality such agency belongs, will also see clearly enough that he is himself responsible for whatever

sensuality and selfishness and sin may be found in him. He will then endeavour earnestly to live such an active and sinless life as is worthy of being dedicated unto God and is in consequence well fitted to enable him to attain salvation.

After clearing in this manner Arjuna's doubts, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to emphasise the importance of the doctrines taught by Him by indicating their divine source and great antiquity and their transmission through a line of teachers beginning with Himself. This naturally leads Arjuna to ask how his contemporary, Śrī Kṛishṇa, could have been the ancient and divine promulgator of those doctrines. In answer to this enquiry, Śrī Kṛishṇa reveals His own nature as God-man to His friend and explains the meaning and aim of divine incarnation as it takes place universally everywhere and in all ages in almost all the great crises in history. From the universality of the process of divine incarnation and its ever beneficent aim, it follows that all roads of religion and morality which lead to the firm establishment of virtue and righteousness, are laid out by God Himself and have God-attainment for their final goal.

After this, Śrī Kṛishṇa takes up the thread relating to the naturally determinate character of men's duties in life and in society. He declares that the division of people in society into classes and castes is natural and God-ordained and is due to the fact of their functions in life having necessarily to vary in accordance with their innate endowments and natural qualifications. It is the physical, mental and moral fitness of persons which determines for them the broad outlines of their function and status in society, so as to make it clear to them to which caste or class they have as a matter of necessity to belong. The *Gītā* is cognisant of caste by birth only to the extent to which it has any bearing through the recognised influence of heredity on caste by qualities, these qualities determining for man his duty or *dharma* in life.

While duty is thus determinate, we have also to pay attention to the disposition of the mind of the worker. For work can create bondage only so long as it is done with selfish motives ; if the motive is unselfish, no work can create bondage. When work is thus ineffective in creating bondage, it becomes equivalent to

'no-work'. It is thus that the question of equivalence between work and no-work is taken into consideration, and it is taught that he alone is truly possessed of intelligence among men, who sees work in no work and no work in work The means whereby the mental disposition which makes work equivalent to no-work, may be acquired can be inferred from the dictum that only such work creates bondage as is not intended and utilised for carrying out divine worship. All forms of divine worship are here conceived to be modifications of the universally typical form of the religious sacrifice. Thus another thread of the old argument is taken up and various mental as well as moral forms of religious worship are declared to be equivalent to the typical sacrifice. Ultimately, the equivalence of work and no work rests on the possibility of transforming work into worship. To demonstrate that such transformability is no mere moral fiction, the relation between work and wisdom is next taken up. We are taught that all work in its entirety culminates in such wisdom in the end, as is the possession of all seers and enables us to see all beings in ourselves and ourselves and all beings in God. Only the man of faith is fitted to be blessed with this wisdom, and with its aid all doubts may be destroyed and all action made incapable of producing the bondage of *karma* Hence Arjuna is called upon to win this wisdom, to work off his ignorance and overcome all his doubts, and then to do his appropriate duty in the appropriate manner.

The combined commendation of both work and no-work by Śrī Kṛishṇa puzzles Arjuna who finds difficulty in understanding which is the better of the two. So he asks Śrī Kṛishṇa to make it clear to him which is the better path of the two, the path of *karma-yoga* or the path of *karma-sannyāsa*. In answer he is told that both the paths are equally worthy, in so far as the supreme good of soul-salvation is concerned. But the path of *karma-sannyāsa*, which is indeed the same as the path of *jñāna-yoga*, requiring worldly renunciation, self-control, meditation and mental concentration, is fit only for the chosen few. But the other path of *karma-yoga* which requires all to do their appropriate duties in life without attachment to the fruits of their work, demands no such special qualifications and is a morally strengthening form of self-discipline suitable for all. It uses life itself to get rid of life's selfishness, and aspirants are trained step by step to

become unworldly, even as they lead a life which is to all appearance worldly. Śrī Kṛishṇa praises equally well both the path of unselfish work and achievement and the path of renunciation and realisation.

But the worthiness of a way of life is determined not by itself altogether; it is also closely related to its suitability for adoption by those for whom it is intended. Each path is, therefore, good in its own place. Both the paths give rise to the same moral result and lead to the same final goal. The chief moral result is the lesson of *samatva* or the equality of all beings. The *jñāna-yogin* arrives at this result through his experience in the state of self-realisation. The *karma-yogin*, by the conquest of all feelings of *ahaṅkāra* and *mamakāra* and by looking upon his soul as the soul of all beings, also arrives at the same lesson. To win freedom from *saṃsāra* and to attain God-like qualities through God-realisation and God-attainment is the goal of *karma-yoga* as well as of *jñāna-yoga*.

Śrī Kṛishṇa then proceeds to state that the acquisition of the moral power of selfishness through living the life of disinterested duty is a necessary preparation for the adoption of the bolder life of renunciation and realisation even by those who possess the required fitness. Then He discusses at some length the *yoga* of meditation and mental concentration, explains how and by whom and under what conditions that *yoga* is to be practised, what the results are of attaining success therein and how these results tend to ratify and uphold the ethical law of universal equality. The practice of *yoga* leads on the fortunate to self-realisation and then to God-realisation. As a consequence of self-realisation, the *yogin* sees all beings in himself and himself in all beings; and as a consequence of God-realisation, he sees God in all beings and all beings in God.

These realisations of the *yogin* ratify the great law of equality and enable him to lead a life in which he feels spontaneously the happiness and misery of others as his own and equally spontaneously endeavours to advance that happiness and remove that misery. Difficult the path of *yoga* is, but it rests on the fact that the mind can be controlled. And no failures that may greet us in our attempts at *yoga* need dishearten us; all our attempts will

contribute to the final success. And so Arjuna is bidden to become a *yogin*; that is to say, he is asked to conduct himself in the manner in which the *yogin* who has arrived at God-realisation and become God-knowing, God-believing and God-devoted, will conduct himself in the situation, surrendering himself entirely to God and making himself no more than a ready and willing instrument to carry out the will of God.

The reality and nature of God are revealed in the ecstatic vision of the successful *yogin*. But successful *yogins* are few, and this completely satisfactory proof of God is practically not available for most of us. However, a cosmological analysis of the universe conducted with a free, open and unprejudiced mind is also capable of leading us logically to a Supreme Being who has to serve as the great centre of power from which the universe proceeds in the course of its evolution and to which it returns at the time of its dissolution. The reality as well as the worthiness of all beings is due to God. And this argument may be supplemented by the need felt by the human heart for religion and by the authority that is required to establish the moral law. In spite of all this, however, the fact remains that there are many people who continue to be sceptical or atheistic. This is due to the obscuration of God behind the veil of His wonderful *māyā*. Whether or not this veil shuts off the vision of God entirely from us is dependent on our nature being divine or demoniacal. In other words, God-vision is possible to man more through the eye of faith than through the eye of reason. Our reasoning must be supplemented by faith before we can see God. Judged from outside characteristics four different kinds of persons are said to possess the necessary faith and in consequence be devoted to God—those in affliction, those who wish to obtain knowledge, those who hunt after wealth, and the truly wise.

Of these, the devotion of the wise men who know that Vāsudeva is all and all-in-all, is the most excellent for the reason that it is absolutely disinterested and arises spontaneously. Other forms of faith and devotion have a value of their own. The general religious instinct of humanity makes itself manifest in various forms in accordance with the culture and character of the persons and communities who feel the need for religion and its support in life. To the wise who have a true and accurate

knowledge of the *Brahman*, of the whole of what constitutes their self or soul and also of *karma* in its entirety, the unity which underlies the diversity of creeds and faiths is easily apparent. They see that the final goal of all forms of faith is the great Vāsudeva and look upon all the deities known to the various forms of religion known to man as the limbs of the one only God. And truth in its undiminished completeness is reached by arriving at the conviction that Vāsudeva is all and all-in-all. The aim of the person who arrives at such a conviction, is to seek freedom from old age and death; and with his divinely devoted mind, his realisation of God is certain to be firm and vivid even at the time of his death and departure from life.

At this stage, Arjuna asks Śrī Kṛishṇa seven questions, arising more or less from what has been taught immediately before. They relate in order to the *Brahman*, the soul, *karma*, matter, divinity, worship and the manner in which God is to be remembered at the time of death. In answer, Śrī Kṛishṇa recapitulates what He has already taught in various contexts to Arjuna. He points out that in the case of every embodied being, the body which is mutable and material, is mortal, while the embodied soul, being spiritual, is immaterial, immutable and immortal. The creative process which brings material embodiments into existence, is *karma*. The *Brahman* is the Supreme Person, the centre and source of all power in the universe, and the object of love and devotion to all saints and devotees. The intrinsic essence of all deities is the *Purusha*; that is, the divinity of all the gods and goddesses known to man comes from the Supreme God Himself. Hence God Himself is the intrinsic essence of all acts of worship, carried out by all embodied beings.

Lastly, the importance of the remembrance of God at the time of death, it is taught, is due to the fact that such remembrance gives rise to God-attainment, which in turn enables the souls to get out of the cycles of evolution and involution which constitute the process of creation. Since success in the practice of the *yoga* of meditation and mental concentration is not possible for many, the enquiry as to other means of God-attainment becomes natural and necessary. So the two paths leading the souls departing from life to freedom and bondage respectively are considered in some detail.

The *archirādi* and *dhumādi mārgas*, or as they were originally known, the *deva-yāna* and the *pitṛi-yāna*, embody an ancient tradition about two paths taken by departing souls. But Śrī Kṛishṇa makes the two paths of the souls' journey after death represent two different ideals of ethics, the interested ideal in which morality is the result of the intellectual harmonisation of conflicting interests and the higher disinterested ideal whose objective is the emancipation of the soul from the bondage of *samsāra* through the practice of absolute unselfishness in life.

Śrī Kṛishṇa then proceeds to explain to Arjuna the noteworthy excellences of *bhakti-yoga*, the system of God-worship which is based on loving devotion. The peculiar greatness of God who is the object of *bhakti-yoga*, is made out to consist in His immanence and transcendence and essential spirituality, in His being the support and the source of the universe. Then Śrī Kṛishṇa pointedly draws attention to the fact that, when God becomes incarnate as man, His divinity remains undiminished. This will be apparent to the great souls to whom *prakṛiti* acts as a revealer of God. The true worshippers of God realise the secret of His simultaneous immanence and transcendence. This dual aspect of God imposes on us the double duty of worship and work From such a view as to the nature of God follows also the great doctrine of the harmony of religions. The highest conception of God is the one in which we look upon Him as both transcendent and immanent at the same time. We have to worship Him and dedicate our whole life unto Him. But we need not look down upon other forms of worship. Those who adopt them attain results which are proportionate to the worthiness of their faith. This does not imply any condemnation of other faiths as irredeemably bad. They are all rungs in the ladder of ascent to the one and only God who is most easily attained through loving devotion, a path which is open to all without restriction of caste or creed or sex and irrespective of the goodness or badness of their own past.

In order to instil and develop *bhakti*, God has to be shown as both realisable and lovable. His intercourse with the world in all its complexity has to be explained. To enable us to understand these facts and to help us to realise the transcendence of God through His immanence, Śrī Kṛishṇa then proceeds to give us

some facts about His *yoga* and *vibhūti*. Everything lives and moves through the power that comes from the Lord, but the unequal distribution of various kinds of excellence in this world indicates to us that specially endowed beings are in some sense specially representative of God and enable us to realise in some measure what the glory of God is like. Even now, our realisation of God is incomplete. The relation of the whole universe in totality to God still remains to be realised, and Arjuna is anxious to see God directly as the omnipresent Indweller who transcends at the same time the universe which He sustains.

In response to the prayerful expression of this wish, Śrī Kṛishṇa graciously grants him the divine vision which enables him to see into the heart of things. And so he sees for a brief while the great and awe-inspiring *viśvarūpa*, the universal form of the Lord. The strange and fearful grandeur of the cosmic destruction that Arjuna sees unnerves him. Further to impress on Arjuna his true status and significance, the Lord addresses him and says : "I have decreed that this war shall take place and that the opposing armies encompass the destruction of each other. With you or without you, the war is certain to take place. You are free to choose only whether or not you will become a mere instrument in My hands for the work of destruction that I have ordained." Then, agreeably to Arjuna's request, the Lord resumes His gracious form and points out that Arjuna need not feel terrified at the vision that he saw. Indeed, only those who are devoted to God continually and exclusively are blessed with this rare vision, for only thus can one know, see and enter into God.

Arjuna then asks : Who follow the better path, those who are devoted to God in this manner or the worshippers of the Unmanifested and Indestructible God? Śrī Kṛishṇa replies that, though both paths lead to the goal of *moksha*, the path of devotion is the easier of the two. He then proceeds to give us a series of graded instructions for following this path, and then to sketch for us the outline of the life of an ideal devotee, which has as its constituent factors the great ideals of *samatva*, devotion and service.

The ethics of the *Gītā* rest on the double foundation of God-realisation and self-realisation. The lesson of equality is the

main feature of this ethics, and it rests on the soul and God in us, as distinguished from what constitutes the material embodiment. If we are to follow this rule of equality with any degree of success, we must learn to distinguish the promptings of the flesh from the dictates of the spirit, both these being closely intermingled in our daily life. A valuable analysis of our complex nature is made next by Śrī Kṛishṇa, in order to teach us to discriminate between what is low and unworthy in us and what is spiritual and divine. With the same object in view, a further examination of the nature of *prakṛiti* and its *guṇas* is conducted. It is taught that all the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* tend to bind the soul, though of the three the *sattva* is the best. All the embodied beings in the universe have all the three *guṇas* present in the constitution of their embodiments, but there is variation in the relative importance of the *guṇas* in their composition. Some are dominated by the *sattva-guṇa*, others by the *rajo-guṇa* and yet others by the *tamo-guṇa*. The way of redemption lies through encouraging the operation of the *sattva-guṇa* in us and in discouraging the influence of the other two *guṇas*. The ultimate ideal must be to rise above the *guṇas* altogether and attain the state of a *guṇatīta*. And this state may be attained most easily by undeviating devotion to the Lord, who is the support of this world of *samsāra* and the world of indestructible immortality, of the enduring law of righteousness and the perfect bliss of the emancipated.

To make this fact clear, Śrī Kṛishṇa proceeds to place before Arjuna the figure of a fig tree, with its roots high in Heaven and its branches spread down below. The tree stands for the world of *samsāra*, and the upward-growing roots indicate its firm establishment in God. There are dependent roots of *karma*, binding the soul in the bondage of matter, and it is through the sword of non-attachment that these roots have to be cut asunder. Śrī Kṛishṇa then goes on to point out the interrelations among the three ultimate principles of philosophical analysis : matter, soul and God. Matter is subordinate to the soul, and both these are under the complete control of God. This is the most secret science of conduct.

To many, however, the vision of a God who is the support of the universe of matter and energy and the principle of consciousness that pervades it, and the source and sanction of the moral law,

is not vouchsafed. Their inherited mental and moral tendencies prevent them from seeing the divine and impel them to live a life of selfishness and sin. A few are endowed with a fund of divine qualities which lead them onward to God. If we have no guide in life save our own untutored instincts and impulses, most of us will find it almost impossible to conquer temptation and strive for spiritual and moral progress. And since even those gifted with a divine moral and mental endowment may have their own moments of weakness and hesitation, the need for an authoritative guide becomes all the more necessary. And so, Śrī Kṛishṇa declares, this authoritative guide for conduct is to be found in the commandments of the *śāstras*.

At this stage, Arjuna asks: How are we to judge of the conduct of persons who are endowed with faith, but who do not conduct themselves in accordance with the commandments of the *śāstras*? In answer, Śrī Kṛishṇa expounds the essentials of a religious life and classifies the faith and worship of men into the categories of the *sāttvika*, the *rājasa* and the *tāmasa*. Worship, self-control and charity—these form the essentials of a religious life. But all aspects of life are influenced by religion, and even the nature of the food that we eat may be seen to be determined by our inborn character, and influences in turn our physical, mental and moral life. Here then are the criteria for judging the worthiness of one's religious life. If our religious faith and life place us in harmonious relations with the plan and purpose of God, then whether the driving force behind our life is belief in the authority of the *śāstras* or some kind of faith which is in consonance with the essential and fundamental conceptions of religion, we shall be leading a truly religious life.

Now, Arjuna raises another question: If the *śastras* are our authoritative guide in conduct, how is it that they teach the apparently mutually contradictory paths of *pravṛitti* and *nivṛitti*? What, indeed, is the true significance of the *tyāga* and the *sannyāsa* enjoined in our *śāstras*? Śrī Kṛishṇa explains that '*sannyāsa*' means the giving up of all actions which are prompted by desire, and '*tyāga*' the abandonment of the fruit of the actions in which one engages. The combined practice of both *sannyāsa* and *tyāga* then would amount to this: that one should give up all work prompted by desire and engage oneself only in the discharge

of one's necessary duties without the least taint of attachment to the fruits of one's work. To enforce this lesson, Śrī Kṛishṇa points out that the successful fruition of any action depends on five factors, of which the agent is only one. The motives which prompt actions, various kinds of agents and different types of actions are then brought under a comprehensive classification into the *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa* categories. The classification is extended to cover other aspects of our life and deals in turn with intelligence, will and pleasure.

In all this, Śrī Kṛishṇa's object is to reinforce the lesson of renunciation taught throughout the *Gītā*, that one should do one's duties without attachment to the fruits thereof. In order to enable men to know the nature of their duties, He proceeds to set forth the functions of the four castes strictly in accordance with their qualities. Every one by understanding his own capacities aright can find out his true duty in life, and by discharging it in the right spirit, attain to the Highest. Through devotion to God, one may most easily cultivate this spirit of detachment. Supreme devotion will enable us to realise that in doing our duties, we are actually serving the Lord. Nothing but the grace of God can save us from the troubles and turmoils of this world. If only we take refuge in His grace and submit ourselves entirely to His will, He will save us from sin and lead us to freedom and bliss. On this note of self-surrender to God, Śrī Kṛishṇa brings His teachings to an end. He then asks Arjuna to do as he pleases. Arjuna, with his doubts dispelled, declares himself ready to obey Śrī Kṛishṇa's bidding. And in the very last verse of the poem, Sañjaya indicates to the blind King Dhṛitarāshṭra the probable course of the war and gives us a picture of Arjuna, wielding his formidable bow.

Here is a running summary of the eighteen chapters of the *Gītā*. I have been to a large extent going over familiar ground here. I trust that what I have tried to explain to you to-day has given you some idea of the course of the evolution of thought and discussion in the *Gītā*. I shall stop here to-day, and next week, when we shall be having perhaps our last class, I shall try to suggest, as well as I can, how the plan and purpose of the *Gītā* may be studied to the best advantage from our point of view.

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Last week, as you will remember, we attempted to construct a running summary of the eighteen chapters of the *Gītā*, paying particular attention to the connected sequence of thought therein. The time has now come, when we can no longer shirk the difficult duty of viewing in proper perspective the plan and purpose of the *Gītā*. We have been studying the *Gītā* as an exposition of the Hindu philosophy of conduct, and it behoves us to make a final survey of the teachings of the poem from this standpoint. And happily enough, on this aspect of the teachings of the *Gītā* there is marked unanimity of opinion among the great teachers of the *Vedānta*, despite the sharp differences that divide them on many fundamental issues of philosophy and metaphysics.

From time immemorial India has believed that Śrī Kṛishṇa effected in the *Gītā* a grand synthesis of philosophical and religious thought, a synthesis which gathered within itself all the diverse trends of thought current at the time and simultaneously shadowed forth all future development. Most of you will recall the oft-quoted stanza which, in a homely but striking image, compares the *Upanishads* to a cow, Śrī Kṛishṇa to a milkman and the *Gītā* to the milk yielded by the cow. Śrī Kṛishṇa, that is, milked out the *Gītā* from the *Upanishads*. Here may be found the considered judgment of Indian thinkers on the many streams of thought that meet and mingle in the *Gītā*. All the illustrious teachers of Hinduism subscribe to this view. None of them finds any irreconcilable contradictions or a jumbled assortment of views and creeds in the *Gītā*. But the Western critics have a different tale to tell. Even the most sympathetic student among them discovers only discord and disharmony. They see only several disconnected and conflicting ideas presented in various contexts or in the same context without any attempt at explanation or reconciliation. They accuse the *Gītā* of being amorphous in form and hazy in thought. We have had occasion to see many times in the course of our study that much which seems contradictory on a superficial examination fits itself easily in the general scheme of thought in the light of some simple explanation or other. Nevertheless, it will not be wise to ignore this point of view in the final survey that we are now trying to make of the plan and purpose of the *Gītā*.

We must note at the outset that the *Gīta* is in the form of a dialogue, a *samvāda* between Śrī Kṛishṇa and Arjuna. In the very nature of the case, it cannot be a set treatise, developing either through analysis or synthesis a close knit system of thought with rigorous logic and without redundancy. The form of the *Gītā* determines the lines along which reasoning and thought have to develop therein. The dialogue offers innumerable opportunities for interesting and dramatic exposition, and as you are well aware, the *Gītā* has not been remiss in taking advantage of these. At the same time, of course, repetitions cannot be avoided, and we have to go backwards and forwards before we reach the end. The use of this literary device is not unknown in the history of European philosophical thought, and the demerits, if any, of the form are not peculiar to the *Gītā*. Indeed, to many Hindu students of the poem, the dialogue form with its human touch, its picture of the interplay of mind and mind, and its arguments and counter-arguments, appears to have outstanding merits. And the fact that the conversational method adopted in the *Gītā* necessitates the development of its theme in a manner markedly different from what is in vogue in modern essays and dissertations does not imply that the *Gītā* is verbose, disconnected, illogical or incoherent.

Let us now set out on our high adventure by noting the fact that the *Gītā* has a definite beginning and a definite end. (Whether it has also a 'middle' in the Aristotelian sense, whether the end and the beginning are naturally and inevitably connected together, it is part of our duty to examine.) The poem starts, as you may remember, with Arjuna's despondency and grief. Merrily enough, he sets out to battle, blowing his conch 'Devadatta' lustily. Weapons and coats of mail clash and jangle as the opposing armies take up their places in battle array, conches are blown, and tumult and noise fill the air. Bow in hand, Arjuna asks Śrī Kṛishṇa to draw his chariot between the two armies, so that he may observe "those who have come together here with the object of fighting and are eager to please in battle the evil-minded son of Dhṛitarāshṭra". (I. 22.) So far we see no hesitation on the part of Arjuna to play his part in the war. If anything, he is eager to join the fray. Natural curiosity and perhaps a desire to estimate the strength of the enemy forces prompt him to make this request.

The knightly code of chivalry prevalent during those days permitted such inspection before the actual commencement of hostilities. And this fact, by the way, disposes of the criticism frequently made that a long philosophical argument between Arjuna and Śrī Kṛishṇa on the eve of battle sins against the fitness of things. As I pointed out to you on a former occasion (Vol. I. p. 54), even after the teaching of the *Gītā* had been completed, the war did not actually begin ; Yudhishṭhira and his brothers still had time to enter the lines of the enemy's forces, in civilian attire, to seek permission from Bhīshma, Droṇa and others to fight against them. They had in those days as elaborate an etiquette for war as the knights of myths and middle ages for their tournaments. And it is surely perverse to superimpose on the setting of the *Mahābhārata* war the conditions that prevail in the mechanised warfare of to-day.

Now, to resume the thread of our argument. The sight of the opposing army produces in Arjuna an unexpected reaction. Sentiment overpowers him, and he is filled with horror at the prospect of killing his kith and kin, friends and preceptors, men to whom he is bound by ties of love or blood. Under the sway of this emotion, his duty assumes for him the features of sin. His cousins, he argues, may see no sin in the slaughter of kinsmen and in treachery to friends, but he who knows better,—should he not turn away from the crime at whatever cost to his worldly prospects ? Not for the sovereignty of the three worlds would he take part in the slaughter of the " fathers and grandsires, teachers and maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons and similarly friends, fathers-in-law and also cordial companions ", who stand ranged against him in battle array. To kill them is sin, and even from a grossly worldly point of view, what joy can be his, after wading knee-deep through the blood of friends and kinsmen to a throne ? So Arjuna sinks down on the seat of his chariot, casts away his bow and unloosens his quiver, his heart overcome with grief and compassion and his mind bemused and bewildered in regard to his duty.

That is the setting at the commencement of the poem. And it may be noted in passing how the feelings of Arjuna are dramatically appropriate in the crisis with which he is faced. It will be difficult to think of a more artistic background for the

discussion in the *Gītā*. Let us now look at the end of the poem. At the conclusion of Śrī Kṛishṇa's discourse, Arjuna exclaims: "Gone is my delusion. Memory has come back to me, O Kṛishṇa, through Your grace. I stand free from doubt. I will now act according to Your word" (XVIII. 73.). He takes up again the arms that he cast away, and Sañjaya gives us in the very last verse of the poem a final glimpse of Arjuna, bow in hand—*Pārtho dhanurdharaḥ*.

It is clear from this that the main purpose of the poem is to resolve Arjuna's doubts about his duty and to induce him to play his part in the great *Bhārata* war. I note this fact, obvious as it may seem, because there are so many conflicting views about the teaching of the *Gītā* that there is a very real danger of our losing the wood for the trees. The *Gītā* presents a particular problem—the problem of Arjuna's right duty in the circumstances in which he was placed—and solves it. Properly to understand the *Gītā*, I submit, this fact must not be overlooked. And, indeed, Śrī Kṛishṇa takes every care to see that we do not forget it. Again and again, He draws Arjuna's attention to his duty in the crisis with which he is faced. Every high argument, as you are well aware, tends to this conclusion and this only.

The *Gītā*, then, sets about answering Arjuna's doubts about his duty. The reasons for Arjuna's refusal to fight may be gathered in part from his own words and in part from Śrī Kṛishṇa's remorseless analysis. Arjuna feels that it is wrong to kill at all and wrong particularly to kill friends and kinsmen. He thinks that he will incur sin by becoming responsible for such inevitable consequences of war as the wide-spread social confusion it will leave in its wake. And he argues that the right duty for him in the circumstances in which he is placed is to obey the scriptural commandment to renounce by becoming a *sannyāsin*. Śrī Kṛishṇa meets these arguments by teaching that every one has his duties in life determined for him according to his natural fitness and qualifications and the environment in which he is placed; that this duty is quite determinate and cannot be evaded by any one except at peril to his own soul; that bondage and sin arise from the disposition with which any work is performed and not from the nature of the work itself; that, when work is performed without attachment to results, it cannot bind the soul; that passive

inaction, which is what complete renunciation of work would mean, is an impracticable, and even if practicable, an undesirable ideal; that the scriptural injunction to renounce must be understood to mean a command to renounce the fruits of one's work and not work itself; that the life of mendicant asceticism is not suited to a man of Arjuna's birth and breeding and will result in unnatural repression and end in a calamitous recoil; and that the guiding hand of God has brought the forces of history to the crisis of war—a crisis which Arjuna cannot avert by any act of commission or omission on his part and in which it is his duty to fight for the vindication of justice, irrespective of the consequences it involves to him and in a spirit of serene detachment and devoted dutifulness.

Here is the thread of Śrī Kṛishṇa's direct reply to the problem presented by Arjuna. The answer is complete and coherent. But it implies certain metaphysical foundations and raises certain questions as regards the practicability of the code of conduct prescribed, and these are dealt with off and on in the glancing play of this memorable dialogue. Śrī Kṛishṇa's discourse on God and man, on duty and devotion, on "fate, foreknowledge and freewill", arose out of the necessity for demonstrating the bases of His ethics; and His description of the disciplines of *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* was intended to facilitate the practical adoption of His teaching by men. We shall have to deal with all these in turn.

We must begin with the question: How is duty determinate? It is taught in the *Gītā* that our duties are determined by the endowment with which we are born and the environment in which we are placed. Our inborn qualities, whether inherited from our parents or not, are the result of the burden of *karma* weighing on our souls. And reacting on our environment, they in turn determine the nature of our duty in life. Failure to discharge our appointed duty is sin. Rejecting the duty that is ours, and hankering after duties that are not ours, will upset the moral equilibrium of our lives and injuriously affect the fountain-springs of our conduct. But even the duty that is ours has to be performed in a spirit of dispassionate detachment. Otherwise, if it is performed for the sake of its fruits, fresh bonds of *karma* will be created.

Underlying this teaching on the nature of duty, there is a metaphysics postulating three* ultimate entities, which we may loosely describe as matter, soul and God. Matter or *prakṛiti* is conceived as dull, inert and dead, the field for the play of the soul. It is mutable, and in that sense, mortal. It has been from the beginning of time and will last till the end of it. The frequent changes of state that matter undergoes are due to the interplay of its three constituent *guṇas—sattva, rajas* and *tamas*. Physically viewed, the *rajo-guṇa* represents universal energy in the process of evolution and the *tamo-guṇa* the same energy in the process of dissolution. The *sattva-guṇa* stands for the steady condition of balanced motion and even life. The *Gītā* accepts the Sāṅkhya theory of evolution with some significant variations. According to this theory, the entire universe of matter and energy has evolved out of a kind of primordial non-differentiated matter, called *prakṛiti* or *mūlaprakṛiti*. This forms the substratum of the universe, undergoes modifications and gives rise to the various kinds and conditions of differentiated matter. It is further held that the process of evolution has to be cyclic in character, inasmuch as it is the *pariṇāmā* or the modification of the cause which gives rise to the effect, and the effect is also apt to be subjected to *pariṇāma* so as to become thereby a cause in its turn. Such an endless series of causes and effects, each effect becoming a cause in its turn, makes what we may call the circle of evolution. In the theistic philosophy of the *Gītā*, this is summed up by the statement that God is the origin as well as the dissolution of the whole world.

The universe of matter and energy is pervaded through and through by the soul. On the question whether this soul is one or many, there is acute difference of opinion among the leading teachers of the *Vedānta*, and as we have often seen, either view can find some measure of support in the *Gītā*. This question raises issues of far-reaching importance in metaphysics. I feel, however, that it will be out of place in a study of the *Gītā* as the Hindu philosophy of conduct to take sides in this controversy and try to prove that the *Gītā* upholds this or that polemical point of view. I shall, therefore, place before you in the first instance the view that the universe is pervaded by a number of separate but essentially similar souls, and that the world of matter and energy, so pervaded by consciousness, is further pervaded and entered

into by God, and the ethical corollaries that follow therefrom. I shall then try to indicate to you how the adoption of the view of the *Advaitin* that the principle of consciousness, which, as the soul, is in association with individual beings of various kinds in the universe, is in essence the same as the Universal Soul, will modify the conclusions that we may have drawn. Let it be borne in mind that even the *Advaitin* grants—so to speak—a sort of limited reality to the universe as conceived by those who differ from him.

I may now proceed to state that the soul is conceived in the *Gītā* to be immortal, immutable and of the nature of consciousness. It is the knowing and experiencing entity within us, the unifying and co-ordinating principle that gives meaning to experience and makes knowledge something more than automatic response to external stimuli. It pervades all things and is present in stocks and stones as well as in plants and animals and men. Nothing in the universe is divorced from the vitalising union of the spirit. The extent to which the principle of consciousness asserts itself in different beings varies, but even in the things that we consider ' dead ', the soul is present, though it suffers there an almost total eclipse of its powers and privileges. There are only differences of degree and not of kind among the various beings in the universe. For even in man in whom the principle of consciousness—to the best of our knowledge—finds its highest expression and freest manifestation, the body clogs the soul and limits its powers to know and to enjoy. The senses are conceived not so much as independent and essential instruments of knowledge for the soul, but as cracks and crevices through which light creeps fitfully into the dungeon in which the soul is imprisoned. Without the senses, the soul can experience in its state of freedom. The senses are like slits in a screen which shuts the soul off from knowledge and bliss. The true nature of the soul can be realised either through an analysis of our mental structure (as is given in III. 42) or the revealing experience of self-realisation which the *yogin* attains in the state of *samādhi*.

The description of God in the *Gītā* has been criticised by many Western students as being full of irreconcilable contradictions. These are, however, more apparent than real, and may all be resolved on the view that God is both transcendent and

immanent at the same time,—a view which has dominated Indian thinking from the *Vedas* downwards. There are differences of opinion among the various schools of the *Vedānta* as to the exact relation between God and the universe. But all agree in looking upon God as being both transcendent and immanent at the same time. It is taught in the *Gītā* that the whole universe, if rightly understood, is an elaborate revelation of God. Both the world of matter and energy and the principle of consciousness which pervades it, constitute *prakṛitis* of God. All that exists as matter or energy or consciousness is dependent for its very existence on the presence of God within it as *Antaryāmin*. At the same time, however, we must look upon God as being above and beyond the universe as well. He is the source of its origin and the culmination of its evolution. This dual aspect of the Godhead indicates to us the complexity of the relation that exists between God and the universe.

The *Gītā* takes special care to bring to our notice that God is related to the universe both as a whole and also in detail. Though everything lives and moves through the power that comes from God, the unequal distribution of various kinds of excellence in this world, it is suggested, must lead us to think of specially endowed beings as being specially representative of God. They enable us to realise in some measure what the glory of God is like. Here too lies the key to the fuller revelation of God that is seen in divine incarnations. The relation of God to the universe as a whole makes it clear that the destiny of the universe lies in His hands. The plan and purpose of history are of His making. At every great crisis in history, God 'descends' into the world and becomes a man among men to direct the course of events towards the ultimate object He has in view. In the vision of *viśvarūpa*, Śrī Kishṇa shows Arjuna that God by being both transcendent and immanent at the same time pervades the universe and extends beyond it, and that the making of history and the process of the universe are determined by Him. The freedom that is allowed to the individual soul is limited to the extent of offering or withholding co-operation to the divine plan. The embodied soul, by listening to the voice of the *Antaryāmin* through the conscience, may adjust itself harmoniously to the plan and purpose of God, or by listening to other voices serve futile causes and ruin its destiny.

The true nature of God may be understood from a cosmological examination of the totality of universal phenomena, which is apt to lead us to the postulation of a Power, above and beyond what is visible, and fully responsible for all that lives and moves. This argument may be supplemented by the need felt for religion in the human heart and the authority that is required to sustain the moral law. This proof may not, however, satisfy certain sceptics and atheists. For the eye of faith has to be opened in addition to the eye of reason before we can see God. The practice of *yoga* is also capable of testifying to the reality of God through a vivid experience in the state of *samādhi*.

The inter-relations among these ultimate postulates of philosophy—matter, soul and God—indicate the principles of sound ethics. It is taught in the *Gītā* that the universe of matter and energy is pervaded by the principle of consciousness, so that this principle, being the knower as well as the enjoyer thereof, is seen to be its sustainer and life-giver ; and that, again, the same world of matter and energy, so pervaded by consciousness, is further pervaded and entered into by God, so that He becomes its absolute and ultimate owner and supporter and enjoyer. The universe of matter and energy is a '*prakṛiti*' of God ; the individual souls, pervading this universe, constitute collectively another and higher '*prakṛiti*' of God, being but sparks from the Flame Divine. Here then we have a graded relationship ; matter is subordinate to the soul, and both these are subordinate to God.

Now, in the world of *saṁsāra*, we find the souls in a state of embodiment. They have become subject to the limitations of the flesh and have forgotten their original freedom and bliss. The life of embodiment is more or less completely dominated by the needs and necessities of the body. The multiform activities of people, the motives which impel those activities and the appetites which are satisfied by the results of those activities, all belong to the body. You will remember that all the evolutionary as well as dissolutionary activities of the universe around us are due to the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. But for these, there can be no activity in Nature and no possibility of doing work. When any person works, it is really the embodiment which does work.

In the *prakṛiti* of every embodiment, some one *guṇa* of *prakṛiti* is dominant. And the status and function in life of any

one as well as his physical, mental and moral quality is determined by this dominant *guṇa*. Many things which we are apt to regard as belonging to the domain of psychology such as desire and aversion, pleasure and pain, are declared in the *Gītā* to belong to the realm of the *kshetra*, the not-self, the field for the play of the soul, on the ground that all these arise as a result of the contact between matter and soul. Due to the close correspondence which is thus believed to exist between our physical embodiment and our moral qualities, the *guṇas* have acquired an ethical reference. *Sattva* represents the illumination of wisdom and "the calm of mind, all passion spent", *rajas* the energising activity of self-aggrandisement, and *tamas* the comatose stupor and deadly inertia of dulness. In other words, each of these *guṇas* reveals itself in its own characteristic way in our moral life. And so all aspects of life, our faith, our worship, our intellect, our will, even the food that we eat, are classified under the three heads of the *sāttvika*, the *rājasa* and the *tāmasa*.

Now, the supreme good of the soul is taught to be freedom from this enforced association with *prakṛiti*, which is imposed on it in a life of embodiment. In some sense or other, this freedom for the soul implies not merely emancipation from bondage to matter, but the attainment of God as well. There is no beginning that we can trace to the contact between matter and soul, but the soul in bondage keeps on moving in the circuit of *saṁsāra*, casting off worn-out bodies and taking up those that are new, like a man who discards old apparel in favour of new. The bondage of the soul to matter is caused as well as maintained by the power of *karma*, the impresseed tendency generated in relation to the soul in consequence of its activities in its state of embodiment.

Following the *Upanishads*, the *Gītā* declares that the binding influence of *karma* is created not by actions as such but by the disposition with which they are done. The thoughts and activities of the embodied soul, if tainted by desire, create the *saṁskāra* of *karma*. At the root of the production of *karma*, therefore, lies our attachment to the fruits of our work. Now, the life of work and achievement in the world of *saṁsāra* is essentially a life of the body; and with the fruits of such work our souls can have no concern. By claiming the fruits of such work, we merely place ourselves at the disposal of the material contacts caused by the

association of our souls with their physical embodiments and confirm and continue our bondage. These contacts with their associated pleasures and pains are of the very stuff of our experience. They naturally give rise in turn to likes and dislikes, and it is by becoming a slave to these that one tends to live a life of selfish attachment. We can, however, manage to maintain the mastery of our will over these likes and dislikes by wisely directing our inborn potentialities. An unnaturally planned life cannot lead us to perfection. Hence it is that the *Gītā* teaches that there is an inviolable rule of choice in regard to our duties and that thase are determined by our fitness for service and by the environment in which we are placed.

Not less important than the right choice of duties is the disposition with which they are done. Having discovered our duties, we must see that they are performed without any possessive interest in their fruits. The basis of all egoism lies in differentiation. Selfishness becomes irrational when the futility and folly of the feelings of 'i-ness' and 'mine-ness' aré understood. Looking at mankind from the standpoint of enduring spiritual realities, we have to conclude that all are equal, all souls being alike in essence. The observation of equality has indeed to be extended so as to include all sentient and what the world deems as non-sentient existence as well. The universal immanence of God also reinforces the lesson of equality. In moral life, the law of equality requires that we should regard the happiness and misery of others as our own. And in its emphasis on the spiritual and the divine in us, it shows the necessity for conquering our tendency to become enslaved to pain and pleasure. The law of equality in fact comprises in itself both the law of duty and the law of love. And as we have seen, this vision of equality becomes the possession of experience in the transcendental states of self-realisation and God-realisation.

To enable us to carry out our duties in this manner and thus to attain the ultimate salvation of soul-emancipation and God-attainment, Śrī Kṛishṇa places before us in the *Gītā* three, or according to some, four paths of moral discipline. There is first the *karma-mārga*, or the path of works, in which we do our duties simply because they happen to be our duties. There is then the path of philosophic wisdom and realisation, the *jñāna-marga*,

which requires of us self-realisation, so that we may be in a position to discriminate between the self and the not-self and distinguish the appropriate aims and objects of the self from the tendencies and promptings of the not-self. Thirdly, we have the *bhakti-mārga* or the path of divine devotion, where intense attachment to God weans us from attachment to all worldly objects whatsoever. The fourth, which is also sometimes given, is the way of *prapatti*, of trustful confidence in and absolute self-surrender to God. Any of these paths of moral discipline can effectively kill the selfish feelings of 'i-ness' and 'mine-ness' and make it possible for us to lead lives of *samatva* and service. It is not necessary to regard these paths as mutually exclusive or antagonistic. Indeed, a well-known teacher of the *Vedānta* in South India expressly states that they are helpful to one another. Opinion, of course, differs among the eminent commentators who have interpreted the *Gītā*, as to which of these paths is the best of all, some holding that *bhakti* or *bhakti* and *prapatti* constitute the one grand key-note in the supreme spiritual harmony that is noticeable in the teachings of the *Gītā* and others maintaining that the *Gītā* teaches the way of salvation through knowledge and wisdom.

According to the *Advaita* school of *Vedānta*, the picture of the universe outlined above will have to vary in many essential particulars. It is maintained by them that the all-pervading Universal Soul is the same in essence as the various individual souls. The experience of individuality is due to a false perspective. The Supreme *Brahman*, under certain *upādhis* or limitations, is looked on as the individual soul. The reality of the individual soul, the external universe of matter and energy, and a Personal God controlling and pervading the universe, rests on the validity of this outlook. In the state of *samādhi*, the oneness of the individual soul with the Supreme *Brahman* may be made out, and all distinctions vanish in the light of supreme wisdom. The epistemology of *Advaita* denies ultimate reality to the so-called external world and our experience of individual personality. In accordance with the tenets of this philosophy, Śaṅkarāchārya points out that the *Gītā* teaches the way of release through converting *pravṛitti*, the path of works, into *nivṛitti*, the path of renunciation. The disinterested performance of duty will help us

in gaining the right vision, which alone can lead us to final release.

Now, applying the principles of the ethics which we have been so far studying to Arjuna's case, what do we find? As has been frequently pointed out in the course of these lectures, Arjuna wanted to reject the duty which was determined for him by both his environment and endowment. Taking his endowment first, we have to note that he was a warrior, born and bred, inheriting the martial spirit of countless generations of Kshattriya ancestors and with an honourable record of distinguished military service. The life of misunderstood renunciation and passive inaction, which he wanted to embrace, would be entirely unsuited to him, however fascinating a way of escape it might offer him for the moment in his perplexity. The environment in which he was placed demanded of him no less the fulfilment of his onerous duty as a general leading an army fighting to vindicate righteousness. The forces of history, under the guidance of God, had brought about the opposing armies to the field. It was beyond the power of Arjuna to avert the conflict. But he could be the instrument of divine justice, restoring order and righteousness in a world for long under the sway of enthroned wickedness, or donning the ochre-robe of the *sannyāsin*, he might basely desert his post of duty. The attitude of Arjuna then comes to this: that he refuses to perform his duty for the simple reason that it is unpleasant for him to do so. Hence Śrī Kṛishṇa calls upon him to shake off this weakness of will and heart and play a manly part in the war, without caring for personal considerations and with full faith in God.

The main outlines of the teachings of the *Gītā* are thus clear, and the reasoning is consistent and cogent. The divergences of interpretation that we have had occasion frequently to notice merely show the spirit of all-inclusive toleration and comprehensive charity, which animates Śrī Kṛishṇa's treatment of the various contending views of life and religion current at that time in this country and makes the *Gītā* almost unique among the sacred books of the world. Reference has been frequently made in these lectures to the tenets of the Sāṅkhya philosophy as having been accepted with some significant variations by the *Vedānta*. We are not in a position to know the exact nature of the Sāṅkhya

philosophy which Śrī Kṛishṇa must have met with. The analysis of the universe into *purusha* and *prakṛiti* and the doctrine of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* are generally attributed to the Sāṅkhya system; and it is also widely held that the school was content with this analysis and did not see any need for postulating a God in its scheme of the universe. The *Vedānta* also endorses in some measure the Sāṅkhyan analysis; and accepting further the proof of the reality of the soul, as found in the Yoga system of thought and practice, which in its latest codified form is aware only of a very inadequate conception of God, it brings these systems of thought into the focus of a larger synthesis by endeavouring to prove that either all the souls in the universe are essentially one and make up the divine and spiritual foundation of the universe, or that they are, though distinct, united together organically or otherwise so as to serve a common divine purpose in obedience to the power of God who is immanent in them and rules over them.

Some indication is given of the comprehensiveness of this synthesis by the fact that even such comparatively lower forms of worship as animism and demonolatry (IX. 24) are brought within its fold. And as the keynote of this grand orchestral symphony, we have what Śrī Kṛishṇa Himself considered to be the best plan of life and the truest system of religion and philosophy. This is, perhaps, summed up in the famous *śloka* with which the eleventh chapter concludes (XI. 55): "He who does My work, holds Me to be supreme, is devoted to Me, is free from all (selfish) attachments, and is devoid of hatred in relation to all beings—he comes to Me, O Arjuna." Adopting this ideal, and making our attitude towards God one of devotion and self-surrender and our attitude towards fellow-men one of universal equality and unselfish service, we may progress to moral and spiritual perfection, whatever our station in life.

And yet, revolutionary as all this synthesis may seem, there is no violent departure from ancient traditions, no triumphant proclamation of a new dispensation. The traditional outlook is deepened and broadened and, indeed, transfigured, but it still remains the traditional outlook and is linked indissolubly with the past. The authority of the ancient revelation is everywhere upheld. Śrī Kṛishṇa deliberately points out that His teachings are

of immemorial antiquity, though they have been lost through lapse of time (IV. 2.). Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that, even if Śrī Kṛishṇa's function was to remind rather than to originate, He had to throw new light on conventional concepts. Even if He was handling old ideas and familiar themes, they had to be re-stated and re-interpreted. And so, everywhere in the *Gītā*, old concepts gain a new significance and hoary conflicts are resolved in a new harmony. The *Gītā* has little sympathy, for instance, with the time-worn cult of sacrifices, but in its anxiety to build on the faith of the past, it refuses to condemn or discard the ancient rite. Śrī Kṛishṇa, on the other hand, gives a new meaning to the concept of sacrifice and makes it typical of religious worship in general. The ritualism of the *Vedas* is thus assigned its proper place in the scheme of things. Not the highest form of religion by any means; but if practised without selfishness and in a spirit of dispassionate detachment, it can also lead to the Highest. To take another example, a new significance is given to the age-old concept of renunciation also; and the conflict between the scriptural injunctions enjoining the practice of *pravṛitti* and those enjoining the practice of *nivṛitti* is resolved and harmonised.

There is yet another aspect of the synthesis in the *Gītā* which is worthy of note. There are critics who say that the ethics of the *Gītā* lay an almost exclusively stress on the obligatoriness of the performance of duty by the individual and have little to say of social and communal welfare. This is, as we have often seen, a wrong view to take. Arjuna has to be shown the imperative necessity for the performance of his duty as a citizen and soldier; and on this Śrī Kṛishṇa has naturally much to say. But you will remember that one of the objections of Arjuna to fight related to the social consequences of war. And Śrī Kṛishṇa's views on the consequences that accrue to society by the success or the failure of individuals in the performance of their duties in life may be gathered from many contexts in the *Gītā*. The vision of *viśvarūpa* thrusts Arjuna right into the middle of the flowing stream of history. Duties being determined by our innate endowments and our environment, the proper performance of our duties contributes as much to our spiritual advancement as to communal welfare. And likewise, our failure to perform our duties hinders our moral progress at the same time that it injures

the commonweal. The interests of the individual and of society thus point in the same direction. Social progress and individual advancement proceed along parallel lines.

In a society fashioned according to the teaching of Śrī Kṛishṇa, with its doctrine of the fit man for the fit place and its ideal of devoted dutifulness, there will be little or no social friction or wastage. But every allowance will be made for differences of moral and religious belief in accordance with temperamental idiosyncrasies. And in respect of economic organisation, it will be so constituted that every member of it will work honestly according to his capacity and aptitude and share in the common produce of the labour so put forth according to his natural needs and requirements. The need for the police functions of the State will continue so long as there are recalcitrant members in the community. The need for the arbitrament of arms will also remain so long as civilised communities fail to recognise that all issues between them should be settled by mutual agreement. But the *sāttvika* ideal of mercy and charity and loving service, as embodied in the lives of a select few, will always serve to remind the many of the ultimate consummation of peace and goodwill on earth. Meanwhile, the *Gītā* teaches us that by working in the world without becoming worldly, we not only help on the salvation of our souls, but also help on the progress of civilisation to the realisation of the destiny which God in His wisdom has ordained for mankind. It is a lesson which everyone, whatever his position in life, needs to learn. The study of this holy and memorable dialogue is, therefore, incumbent on the young and the old, on the learned as well as the unlearned, upon those who believe and those who do not believe. All sorts and conditions of men may study the *Gītā* and derive priceless profit from it. What is required is only an unbiassed and receptive mind, eager to learn, ready to criticise as well to accept, but not to calumniate.

You are now in a position to see how the teachings of Śrī Kṛishṇa harmonise human civilisation and its institutions and place before us an ideal which aims at organising the component communities that make up mankind in all their different grades of development into an amicable and interdependent family. If I may repeat here what I said in the very first of this series of

lectures: "Impressed in all probability by His varied racial and social environment, He (Śrī Kṛishṇa) propounded His religion of harmony and synthesis, and constructed for the good of mankind a plan of life, wherein while the actual differences among men and among human communities in colour and creed are not wholly ignored, as they well cannot be, the way to attain that highest ethical and spiritual perfection which is possible for man, is freely open to all, irrespective of all such differences. Universal harmony, cosmopolitan love and tender concern for and loving sympathy with those weaknesses of man, which are due to unfinished growth and incomplete development, constitute the conspicuous moral feature of the grand religious synthesis taught by Śrī Kṛishṇa." To-day more than ever, the world, grown smaller by the inventions of modern science and with its animosities, racial and religious, political and economic, all grown bitterer, stands in need of the synthetic vision and divine insight of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

Gentlemen, this long course of lectures has now come to an end. When I undertook the grave responsibility of expounding the *Gītā* to you, I did not anticipate that it would take so long nor require from you so much patience and sacrifice of time. For nigh on two years, week after week—except for certain unavoidable interruptions—we have been meeting together to pursue our united endeavour to learn from the wisdom of Śrī Kṛishṇa. Once again, I may beg of you to note, whatever the value of these lectures, I have not come before you as an authoritative religious preceptor, laying down the law on the interpretation of the *Gītā*. In all sincerity and humility, I have endeavoured only to place before you what I have learnt after earnest study and thought from the *Bhagavadgītā*. The great commentaries of our famous *Achāryas* have been of invaluable assistance to me. If, however, I have occasionally departed from their interpretations, it is not on account of vanity or self-conceit. The standpoint adopted in these lectures has been slightly different, and furthermore I have always felt that the utmost possible benefit from the study of the *Gītā* can be derived only when it is understood and appreciated in the light of one's own reasoning and religious aspirations. I do not, of course, claim that these lectures constitute either a completely exhaustive or entirely original study of the *Gītā*. Doubtless there are many aspects of the *Gītā* which

we have failed to examine, and it is very probable that I may have erred and erred grievously in many a context. Indeed, every week that has passed since this course of lectures was begun made me more and more conscious of my limitations and more and more diffident. Nothing could have sustained me for so long but the strong conviction that even such imperfect and inadequate study of the *Gītā* as we may make in these classes will prove of some profit to us all, by way at least of stimulating thought and discussion, and that it may in the end prove to be a contribution, however humble and insignificant, towards bridging the gulf which separates, in these days of intellectual ferment and social unrest, the old thought of the East from the new thought of the West. Much may be forgiven, I submit, to one who well-meaningly but not too wisely accepts such a serious responsibility as your friendly partiality assigned to me two years ago. And that is how I would request you to judge my numerous shortcomings.

It remains for me only to thank you all for the patience with which you have listened to these lectures and the courtesy that you have uniformly extended to me. I am also deeply grateful to the Śrī Pārthasārathy Swāmi Sabhā for arranging these classes and for persuading me to overcome my natural diffidence to undertake a task of this magnitude. For though I cannot know how far these lectures have been of help to you in your own study of the *Gītā*, they have provided me with an invaluable opportunity for reverent and fruitful study of one of the great scriptures of the world. How well or ill I have utilised this opportunity, it is for you to judge.

I am sure that none of you thinks that the completion of this course of lectures frees you from the obligation to study and understand the *Gītā*. It is one of the few books in literature which have to be read, re-read and pondered over; and to which we have to come again and again for light and guidance. Our ability to understand the *Gītā* grows with experience—not merely individual experience but social experience as well. The divine dialogue thrills us to-day quite as much as it did Sañjaya when he heard it for the first time. And if Sañjaya felt the assurance that success, prosperity and righteousness would be found wherever the Divine Teacher and His ideal disciple stood, may we not hope

that when we are all ready, even like Arjuna, to hearken to the teachings of the *Gītā* and obey the commands of the Lord, the world will have advanced a long way towards that

> ....one far-off divine event
> To which the whole creation moves ?

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A Glossary of the Sanskrit words, occurring in the Text of the Lectures

(Arranged according to the English Alphabet).

A

Abhimāna—pride, haughtiness, a high opinion of one's self.

achāpalaṁ—not moving or changing, steady.

achara—not moving.

āchārya—one whose precepts are to be followed, a teacher or spiritual preceptor ; a title applied more particularly to the three great teachers of the *Vedānta* in South India, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva.

achetasaḥ—nominative plural of '*achetas*', meaning 'destitute of consciousness, insensible, inanimate'.

ādhāra—support or prop: that which contains.

adharma — unrighteousness, wickedness ; sinful deed.

adhishṭhāna—basis, base ; abode, seat ; substratum.

adhvaryu—a priest officiating at a sacrifice ; the technical name of a particular class of priests, whose special duty it is to chant the hymns of the *Yajur-veda* at sacrifices.

adhyātma-jñāna-nityatvaṁ—constant possession of knowledge of the self.

adhyāya—reading, study, especially study of the *Vedas* ; a chapter.

adroha—freedom from treachery.

Advaita—non-duality, oneness; the monistic school of the *Vedānta* philosophy.

Advaitin—one who upholds or follows the principles of the *Advaita* philosophy.

Agni—fire, the god of fire.

Agnishṭoma—praise of Agni: name of a sacrifice forming an essential part of the *Jyotishṭoma*.

ahaṅkāra—'i-ness'; the idea that one is the agent and therefore the owner of the fruits of the work done by one : egotism ; that modification of the principle known as *mahat*, in which the tendency for individualisation in matter makes its appearance for the first time in the evolution of Nature according to the Sāṅkhya philosophy.

ahiṁsā—harmlessness, freedom from the tendency to injure.

aikāntika-sukha—absolute happiness, perfect bliss.

aiśvarya—power, supremacy ; wealth.

Aitarēya-brāhmaṇa—a *brāhmaṇa* relating to the *Rig-vēda*.

ajñāna—ignorance, as indicating the absence of knowledge, the opposite of knowledge, or wrong or perverse knowledge.

ajñānajaṁ—arising or springing from ignorance; also giving rise to ignorance.

akāra—the letter or sound '*a*'.

Akaraṇe pratyavāyaḥ—(There is) sin in omission to do (prescribed duties).

akārya—not to be done: action which it is improper for one to do; work for which one is not qualified.

ākāśa—the 'ethereal' space; the sky or 'ether' considered as one of the five elements known to Hindu thought: a subtle and ethereal substance supposed to pervade the universe and to be the peculiar vehicle of sound.

akṛitātmānaḥ—nominative plural of '*akṛitātman*,' meaning one having an undisciplined self.

akrodha—absence of anger, forbearance.

akshara purusha—the immortal self; the imperishable entity.

akuśala—inauspicious, evil, unpleasant.

ālasya—idleness, laziness.

aloluptvam—freedom from desire.

alolutvam—steadiness; indifference to sensual objects.

alpa-buddhayaḥ — nominative plural of '*alpa-buddhi*', one having a feeble or mean mind.

amedhya—not fit for sacrifice; impure, unholy.

amṛita—(n.) immortality: the world of immortality: nectar: (adj.) immortal.

amśa—a part.

anabhishvaṅga—one who is free from attachment.

anādi—beginningless.

anāditva—beginninglessness.

anishṭa—disagreeable.

antariksha—the middle region or the mid-world, which is situated between the earth and heaven.

Antaryāmin—internal controller; God as controlling and guiding everything in the universe from within.

anumantṛi—one who permits.

anya—other, different.

apaiśuna—freedom from tale-bearing; uprightness.

apamāna—disgrace, dishonour.

apāna—breathing out, expiration: of the five 'vital airs', that which goes down,

apohana—removing, removal of doubt by argument: reasoning: inference.

aparaspara - sambhūtaṁ—produced without reciprocal relations (between an antecedent cause and a subsequent effect.)

aprākṛita—not belonging to or derived from Nature; not phenomenal.

apratishṭha—having no support.

apravṛitti—abstinence from action.

apriya—disagreeable, disliked.

āptatva—credibility, trustworthiness; truth.

apūrva—literally, unprecedented: the unforeseen consequence of an act, especially of religious rites.

Ārambha—beginning; undertaking.

Archirādi-mārga—the path which is described by epithets beginning with light; *devayāna* or the path of the gods.

ārjavaṁ—straightness, straightforwardness, rectitude.

ārta—afflicted, depressed.

artha—object; meaning; wealth.

arthārthin—one who seeks for wealth.

asad-grāha — unrighteous resolution.

asakta—one who is unattached.

āsaṅga—attachment.

asat—non-existence; unreality: untruth.

aśubha—inauspicious.

aśuchi naraka—impure hell.

aśuchi-vrata—one wedded to an unholy vow.

Asura—a demon or an evil spirit; an enemy of the gods.

āsura—demoniacal.

āsurī sampat-diabolical wealth; endowment of evil qualities.

āsurī sṛishṭi—same as *āsura sarga*, creation of demoniacal beings.

aśvattha—a kind of fig tree, the *Ficus Religiosa*.

ātatāyins—deathworthy felons.

Atharva-veda—name of the fourth *Vēda*.

atimānitā—self-conceit: having too high an estimate of one's self.

atithi-satkāra—honouring a guest.

ātman—the soul or the self; one's self; God.

atma-buddhi-prasādajaṁ—giving rise to or springing from a clear knowledge of the soul.

ātma-vinigraha—self-control; subjugation of the self.

atyāgin—one who is not a *tyāgin*, one who has not renounced.

avamāna—diohonour.

avatāra—descent; descent of God; incarnation of God as a man.

avidyā–nescience; cosmic ignorance; absence of true knowledge.

avijñēyaṁ—unknowable.

avyabhichāra, *avyabhichārinī*—steady, unswerving.

avyakta—the primordial basis of the universe of matter.

avyaya—not subject to change; indestructible.

Baddha—bound.

baddha-jīva—the bound soul tied down to live in matter.

bandha—bondage, confinement.

Bhagavadgīta—Divine Song; the famous name of the well-known dialogue in the *Mahābhārata* between Śrī Kṛishṇa and Arjuna, treating of the philosophy of conduct: it consists of 18 chapters and forms part of the *Bhīshma-parvan* which itself is one of the 18 *parvans* or books into which the great epic is divided.

Bhagavat-pravṛitti-virodhi-sva-pravṛitti-nivṛitti—abstinence from such activity as is opposed to the activity of God.

bhakta—a devotee of God.

bhakti—loving devotion.

bhakti-mārga—the way of attaining salvation through loving devotion to God.

bhartṛi—supporter.

bhāshya—an explanatory work, a commentary.

bhāvanā—the internal mental impression forming the basis of conceptual knowledge: imagining.

bhāva-saṃśuddhi—purity of mind.

bhaya—fear.

bhoktṛi—one who enjoys or experiences.

bhogopakaraṇa—an associated auxiliary instrument for the enjoyment of experiences.

bhūta-sarga—creation of beings.

brahmacharya—celibacy, restraining sensual appetites.

Brahma-bhūta—one who has become the *Brahman*.

Brahma-bhūya—becoming one with the *Brahman*.

Brahma-bhūyāya kalpate—(he) succeeds in becoming the *Brahman*.

Brahma-chakra—literally, the wheel of the *Brahman*; the circle of the universe.

Brahman—the Great Being: the Supreme Being or the Infinitely Big Being: the individual self: the *Veda*: the universe as the visible infinite.

Brāhmaṇa—a member of the Brahmin caste: an appendix to a *Veda*, being a kind of commentary thereon.

Brahma-prāpti-attainment of the *Brahman*.

Brahmāstra — literally, the arrow or weapon of Brahmā; name of a magical weapon supposed to be the gift of Brahmā and believed to possess irresistible powers of destruction.

Brahma-sūtras — aphorisms relating to the *Brahman*; particularly, the name of a work attributed to Bādarāyaṇa, dealing in a systematic manner with the principles of the *Vedānta*.

Brahma-vādin — one who discusses the *Brahman*, an enquiring philosopher.

Bṛihadāraṇyakopanishad—one of the well-known ten *Upanishads*.

Buddha—the Enlightened One, the title by which the founder of Buddhism is widely known.

buddhi—the faculty of intellection; intelligence.

Chaitanya—consciousness.

chaṇḍāla—an outcaste; a man of horribly wicked life.

chara—moving.

charama-śloka—the last stanza.

Chārvākas—a class of Indian philosophers who are atheistic secularists and materialists.

cheshṭā—gesture, action, activity, behaviour.

chetanā—consciousness.

chetanādhṛiti — the vehicle consciousness.

Chetanānāṁ chetanaḥ—consciousness of the conscious; the soul of souls; an epithet of God.

chhandas—metre, esp. *Vedic* metre; the sacred text of the *Vedic* hymns.

chhāndāmsi—plural of *chhandas*, *q. v.*

Chhāndogyopanishad—one of the ten principal *Upanishads*; it is attached to the *Sāmaveda*.

Daiva—appertaining to the gods; divine.

daiva-sarga—creation of beings with divine qualities.

daivī—same as *Daiva*, *q. v.*

daivī sampat—lit. divine wealth; endowment of divine qualities.

dākshya—skill: cleverness.

dama—self-control.

dambha—ostentation, arrogance, pride.

dāna—giving, gift, charity.

darpa—vanity, hauteur, pride.

dayā — sympathy, mercy, compassion.

deha-bhṛit—one who supports a body; an embodied soul.

deva—a god.

devatā—divinity, a god.

Deva-yāna—the path of the gods; in ancient Aryan mythology, one of the two paths by which the departing soul may travel.

dhanur-dhara—one who holds a bow.

dharma—justice and righteousness; virtue, religion, morality; righteousness and duty; a characteristic quality.

dharmajña—one who knows the *dharma*.

dharma-saṅkata—a conflict of duties.

dharma-tyāga—giving up of duties or rituals.

dhīra—a brave or heroic person.

dhṛiti—will, resolution.

Dhūmādi-mārga—the path which is described by a group of epithets beginning with smoke.

dīrgha-sūtrin—one who works very slowly.

dosha—defect, sin.

duhkha—grief, sorrow, pain.

dushkṛita-karma—evil deed; sinful action.

dushpūratva—the quality of being difficult to be satisfied.

dvandvas—physical or psychological pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, pleasure and pain, desire and aversion.

dvandvātīta—he who has risen above the power of the pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, pleasure and pain, desire and aversion.

dvesha—aversion, hatred.

Ekādaśi—the eleventh day of the lunar half-month, when it is considered meritorious to fast.

Gau, *go*—the earth.

Gītā—a song; the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

gītām—(past participle)—sung.

gochara—literally, the range of the cattle, pasturage; range in general, particularly the range of the organs of sense.

grāha—seizing, laying hold of; resolution.

guhya—secret.

guhyatamaṁ śāstraṁ—most secret science.

guṇa-bhoktṛi — enjoyer or experiencer of the *guṇas*.

guṇas—the three qualities' of *prakṛiti*, viz., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

guṇasaṅkhyāna—the enumeration of the *guṇas*.

guṇātītas—those who have transcended the *guṇas*.

guṇa-traya-vibhāga-yoga — the discipline based on the differentiation of (the effects of) the *guṇas*.

guṇātyaya — the state of transcendence of the *guṇas*.

guṇebhyaḥ paraṁ—that which is above the *guṇas*.

guru—preceptor.

Hita—good, benificent.

hotṛi—a priest of the *Ṛig Veda*.

hrī—shyness, modesty.

Indriyas—the organs of sense or action.

Īśāvāsyopanishad—the first of the well-known ten *Upanishads*; it belongs to the *Vājasaneya-samhitā* known as the *White Yajurveda*.

ishṭa—desirable.

Īśvara—master, lord; God; the personal God as distinguished from the *Nirguna-brahman*, the Absolute without attributes.

iśvara-bhāva — mastership, lordship; the quality of a ruler, royal or imperial state.

Jaḍa—devoid of the power of knowing, inert, unconscious.

jaḍa-prakṛiti—inert matter; material Nature as contrasted with consciousness.

janmāntara-vāsanā — the impressed tendency arising from another birth.

jāti-smāra—a person who has acquired the power of knowing the nature of his many previous births or states of re-incarnation.

jijñāsu—one desirous of knowing.

jīva—the principle of life; the soul.

jīvātman—the individual self.

jñāna—knowledge; wisdom; theory.

jñānānandamaya—made up of knowledge and bliss.

jñāna-gamya—that which is to be reached by knowledge; the object of knowledge.

Jñāna-kāṇḍa—that part of the *Veda* which deals with the nature of God and the way of salvation.

jñāna-yajña—a moral form of sacrifice; mental worship.

jñāna-yoga—the practice of meditation and mental concentration for the acquisition of self-realisation and God-realisation.

jñāna-yogin—a person who has attained self-realisation and God-realisation by means of the acquisition of true wisdom through meditation and mental concentration.

jñānin—the man of knowledge; the man who is possessed of supreme wisdom and has arrived at the realisation derivable from success in the practice of *yoga*.

jñātṛi—a knower.

jñeya—that which is to be known.

jyotis—light.

Jyotishāṁ Jyotiḥ—Light of lights.

jyotishṭoma—a *soma* sacrifice, considered as typical of a whole class of sacrifices.

Kaivalya—'alone-ness'; self-abidance; becoming one with the Supreme; the state of salvation.

kāma—desire; an object of desire; wishful will.

kāma-haituka — caused or produced by desire.

kāma-rāga-balānvita – impelled by (lit. having) the force of *kāma* and *rāga*.

kāmāśrita — dependent on desire.

kāmya—desire-impelled.

kāmya-karma—action impelled by desire.

karaṇa—an instrument or means of action; an expedient; an organ of speech or action.

kāraṇa—cause.

karāvalambha—giving a helping hand.

karma—work; act; action done in the previous states of the embodied existence of the soul; the impressed tendency generated in relation to the soul in consequence of acts done in the previous states of its re-incarnation.

karma-bandha—the bondage of *karma, q. v.*

karma-chodanā—the incitement to action; the motive behind ritual acts.

karma-kāṇḍa—that part of the *Veda* which deals with sacrifices and the rules and rituals connected therewith.

karma-mārga—the *Vedic* path of ritualism; the path of work and duty.

karma-phala-tyāga—the renunciation of the fruits of actions.

karma-saṅgin—one attached to work.

karma-saṅgraha—the epitome of action (being the term applied for a summarised analysis of the constituents of action in XVIII. 18.).

karma-sannyāsa—renunciation of work.

karma-yoga—the doctrine of work; the right practice of duty.

karma-yogin—one who successfully follows the doctrine of work by the due performance of disinterested duty.

kartṛi—agent.

kārya—effect; work to be done; what ought to be done; what is fit and right to be done.

Kathopanishad—one of the well-known ten *Upanishads*; it is attached to the *Yajur-Veda*.

kavi—a wise seer, a poet.

kāya—body.

kiṁ anyat—what else?

kṛita-kṛitya—one who has done what has to be done; one who has accomplished his object or fulfilled his duty.

kṛitātman—one with a disciplined self.

kṛitsnaṁ kshetram—literally, the entire field; figuratively, the whole universe conceived as a field for the play of the soul.

krodha—anger.

kshamā—patience, forbearance, forgiveness.

kshānti—same as *kshamā*, *q. v.*

kshara—perishable.

Kshattriya—the aristocratic military caste in the organisation of Hindu society.

kshetra—field, cultivable land; the body or matter considered as a field for the play of the soul.

kshetra-jña—lit. one who knows the field; the soul or God.

kshetrin—lit. one who owns a field: the soul or God.

kuśala—auspicious, pleasant.

kūṭastha—he who is immovably aloft; the spirit which is uninfluenced by the tendencies of the flesh; God.

Laya—destruction.

lobha — covetousness, greed, avarice.

loka—the world: any division of the universe; a company or community of people.

Mada — intoxication, pride, arrogance.

madhu-parka—the 'honeyed meal', an offering of honey and milk offered to guests, bridegrooms etc.

Mahābhārata—the great Indian national epic of eighteen books, said to have been composed by Vyāsa.

mahābhūtāni — the great elements, namely, the earth, water, fire, air and ether.

mahat—one of the principles forming a link in the Sāṅkhya chain of universal evolution; that evolved condition of *prakṛiti* in which it is first made manifest and able to produce the many material things making up the universe.

makāra—the letter or sound 'M'.

mamakāra—'mine-ness'; the idea of ownership in regard to the results of one's work.

mama sādharmyamāgatāḥ—those who attain sameness of characteristics with me.

māna—honour; self-confidence, arrogance.

manaḥ-kriyā—the function of *manas*.

manas—the internal organ of sense or faculty of attention; mind.

mānasa tapas—mental *tapas*.

mānasika—relating to the mind; mental, spiritual.

manīshiṇaḥ—nominative plural of '*manīshin*', one who is thoughtful, intelligent, wise.

mano-vāk-kāya—mind, speech and body, making up the three instruments of the soul known as *tri-karaṇa*.

mantra—a hymn; a charm or spell: a prayer-formula.

mārdava—softness, gentleness, kindness.

mat-prasādāt—through my grace or favour.

mauna—silence.

māyā — wonderful power: illusion; the phenomenal universe as hiding the ultimate reality.

māyā-śakti—the power of *māyā*.

Mīmāmsā—lit. enquiry, examination; more particularly, the *Pūrva-mīmāmsā*.

Mīmāmsaka—same as *Pūrva-mīmāmsaka*, *q. v.*

miśra—mixed, adulterated.

moha—delusion, infatuation.

moksha—the salvation of soul-emancipation, the blissful beatific freedom arising from perfect self-realisation.

mukta—one who has been freed; one who has attained the salvation of soul-emancipation, one who is liberated from the bondage of *samsāra*.

mukta-jīva—the freed soul, the soul which has emancipated itself.

muktāvasthā—the state of being free.

mūla-prakṛiti — the same thing as *prakṛiti* conceived to be the root-source of all the material things found in the universe.

muni—a seer; a sage; one who is blessed with the intuitive vision of inner inspiration.

Naishkarmya—the state of being unaffected by *karma*.

naishkarmya-siddhi — success in (attaining) *naishkarmya*.

naraka—hell, a world of correction.

naraka-dvāra—doorway to hell.

nashṭātman—one whose soul is lost, who is deprived of mind or sense.

nātimānitā—freedom from self-conceit.

neti—may be split up into '*na*' and '*iti*', meaning "No".

nidrā—sleep.

niratatvaṁ — devotedness, attachment.

nirdeśa—description, designation, specification.

nirguṇa—free from the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*: without attributes.

Nirguṇa-brahman—the Absolute without attributes.

nishkriya—actionless, unengaged in work.

nitya—ever-enduring, eternal.

nityatva—immortality, persistence through eternity.

nivṛitti-mārga—the path of renunciation and retirement.

niyata-karma—work which it is obligatory to do, necessary duty.

Oṁ—the syllable called *praṇava* and understood to denote the Supreme Being; it is usually uttered in association with the recital of *Vedic* hymns and religious prayers and formulas, and is conceived to have a mystic significance of great value.

Omiti Brahma—*Oṁ* is the *Brahman*.

Om tat sat—'Yes, It exists', an old formula affirming the underlying basis of all religion.

oṅkāra—the syllable *oṁ*.

oshadiśa—lit. the lord of the herbs; an epithet of the moon.

Pāpa—sin; sinful action; tendency impressed on the minds of people by their evil deeds.

parā bhakti—(lit.) supreme devotion.

Para-brahman—the supremely transcendent and unlimitedly Big Being; God.

parā gati—the highest state.

paraṁ—superior.

Parama-purusha—the Supreme Person; God.

parama-purushārtha — the supreme purpose of human life; the salvation of soul-emancipation.

Paramātman—the supreme soul of the universe; God.

Parameśvara—the Supreme Lord; God.

pari-jñātri—knower.

pariṇāma — modification, evolution.

pārushya—harshness, cruelty.

paryushita—having passed the night, stale (esp. of food).

pathya—proper, wholesome, salutary.

pathya-vākya—salutary speech, wholesome advice.

phala—fruit, result: desired end in view.

phala-śruti—literally, 'hearing of the fruits'; a conventional form of literary epilogue in Sanskrit, praising the study of the work to which it is annexed.

phala-tyāga—renunciation of (the) fruits (of one's action.)

Pitṛi-yāna—the path of the fathers, one of the two paths by which the souls were believed to travel after death in ancient Aryan mythology.

prabhu-sammita—corresponding to a lord, from the standpoint of a master.

prakāśa--brightness, splendour, light.

prākṛita-prapañcha — the phenomenal universe.

prakṛiti—Nature; the material of which the embodiment of the soul is composed; the primordial substance from which all the material beings in the universe are evolved.

pralaya—'the great destruction', the dissolution of the universe.

pramāda--negligence, carelessness.

pramāṇa—an authority.

prāṇa—life, the 'vital air'.

prāṇa-kriyā—vital function, life-activity.

praṇava—the mystic syllable, *Oṁ*.

prapañcha—the visible universe.

prapadya iyataḥ—surrendering (to Him) from whom.

prapadye yataḥ—I seek refuge (with Him) from whom.

prapadyet yataḥ—one should seek refuge (with Him) from whom.

prapanna—one who adopts *prapatti*.

prapatti—complete faith in and absolute self-surrender to God.

prasāda—limpidity, clearness; favour, grace.

prasaṅga—great attachment.

prasakti — bearing upon, applicability.

pratishṭhā—base, foundation; stay, support.

pratyaksha-jñāna — direct knowledge, knowledge obtained by preception.

pratyakshānubhova — direct experience, experience of perception.

pravāla—a tender shoot, a sprout.

pravṛitti—activity, the active life of aggressive achievement.

pravṛitti-mārga—the path of the active life of aggressive achievement as opposed to the life of retirement and renunciation.

pravṛiddhi—increase.

priti—love, affection, liking.

priya—agreeable, pleasing; beloved, dear.

pūjā—honour, worship.

puṇya — merit; meritorious deed: tendency impressed on the minds of people by their good deeds.

Purāṇas—a class of Hindu sacred writings containing the myths and legends and traditional history of the ancient Hindus.

purusha—he who abides within an embodiment; a soul; a person.

purushārtha—an object of human pursuit; an aim of life.

Purusha-sūkta — the *Vedic* humn which describes the creation of the universe from the Supreme Person (*Ṛig-Veda*, X. 90.).

Purushottama — the Highest Person; God.

Pūrva-mīmāmsā—the "earlier enquiry", so called in relation to the later *Vedāntic* enquiry regarding the *Brahman*; one of the six systems of Hindu philosophy dealing mainly with the question of *Vedic* sacrifices and their results.

Pūrva-mīmāmsaka—one who follows the *Pūrva-mīmāmsā* school of philosophy.

Putra-kāmeshṭi — a sacrifice performed by one who wishes to obtain a son.

rāga—desire, longing: longing for pleasure and pleasurable objects.

rāgadvesha—desire and aversion.

rāgin—one having *rāga*.

rajas—that 'quality' of *prakṛiti* which represents its highly active condition full of enlivening and aggressive energy.

rājasa—pertaining to that 'quality' of *prakṛiti* which is known as *rajas*.

rajo-guṇa—the 'quality' of *rajas*.

Rāmāyaṇa — the celebrated Sanskrit epic of Vālmiki dealing with the story of Rāma and his wife Sītā.

rasa—essence; juice; sap: taste.

rasavarja—with the relish lingering.

Ṛig-veda—the first of the four *Vēdas*, the sacred scripture of the Hindus.

ṛiju—straight, straightforward, upright.

ṛishis—sages; spiritual seers; seers of perfected spiritual vision.

Sakāma—having desire.

sādhana-bhakti—*bhakti* considered as a means for the attainment of some desired end in view.

sādhya-bhakti—*bhakti* regarded as an end in itself.

sādhu—(adj.) good.

sādhu-bhāva—goodness.

sahaja-kāma—natural or inborn desire: the instinctive urge to satisfy the primal needs of life.

sahaja-karma—work to which one is born, work for which one is fitted.

sallekhana—a discipline practised by the Jains in which the power of the flesh is made weak by starvation, until ultimately the person undergoing it dies in a state when, it is believed, the powers of his spirit are strong enough to secure emancipation.

śama—self-control: peace.

samādhi—concentrated attention and mental realisation: the last stage of mental concentration in the practice of *yoga*, the stage in which the person practising it is so fully absorbed in self-awareness as to be altogether unaware of the external world.

samāna—one of the five 'vital airs'.

sāmānya-dharmas — common *dharmas*, general duties.

samatva—evenness, equality, evenness and impartiality of disposition in relation to pleasure and pain, to success and failure; equality of sympathy and love in relation to all beings.

Samatvaṁ yoga uchyate—Evenness (of mind) is declared to be *yoga*.

Sāma-Veda—the third of the four *Vedas*.

sampratishṭhā—same as *pratishṭhā*, *q. v.*

sampravṛitta—arisen.

saṁsāra—the course of the soul's recurring re-incarnation.

saṁsiddhi—complete accomplishment: perfection; final emancipation.

saṁskāra—the impression left on the mind by the previous acts and experiences; internally impressed tendencies: agreeable and disagreeable mental effects which good and evil deeds respectively produce.

saṁvāda—a dialogue.

sandhyā-vandana — morning and evening worship.

saṅga—attachment; attachment to the experience of the senses.

saṅga-tyāga—giving up of *saṅga*.

saṅghāta — collection, compound, assemblage.

saṅkalpa—resolve.

saṅkalpa-prabhava-kāma — desire born from the wishful will; sophisticated desire, as distinguished from the natural or inborn desire, and calculated to pander to the satisfaction of the senses.

Sāṅkhya—knowledge; theory; the philosophy of Kapila.

Sāṅkhya-kārikā—name of a work by Īśvarakṛishṇa, which expounds the system of *Sāṅkhya* in a small number of mnemonic stanzas.

sānkhya-yoga—the theory of conduct arrived at in accordance with speculative reason.

sannyāsin—one who has renounced all worldly attachments : an ascetic : a mendicant monk.

śānti—tranquillity, peace : blissful peace of mind.

śaranāgati—seeking refuge or protection ; particularly seeking refuge at the feet of God : *prapatti*.

Śaranāgati-gadya—name of a prayer by Rāmānujāchārya, one of the great teachers of the *Vedānta* in South India.

śārira-tapas—*tapas* of the body.

sarvabhāvena—with all states of mind.

sarva-dharmān — (accusative case) all *dharmas*.

śarva - karma - phala - tyāga — renunciation of the fruits of all actions.

sarva-karma-tyāga – renunciation of all actions.

Sarvāntaryāmin—the Internal Controller of all ; the immanent God.

sarvārambha-parityāgin — one who relinquishes all endeavour.

sarvathā vartamāna—living in all manner of ways.

sarvatra—everywhere, in relation to all (kinds of work).

śās—a root meaning 'to command'.

śāsana—an order, edict.

śāstra—any sacred book of divine or standard authority.

śāśvata - dharma — eternal *dharma*.

Sat—Existence : that which exists : the Absolute.

Sat eva saumya — Existence alone, dear child, (was this in the beginning).

satkāra—honour.

sattva—that 'quality' of *prakṛiti* which is observable in the steady condition of balanced motion and calm conscious life.

sattva-guṇa—the quality of *sattva*.

sattva-saṃśuddhi — same as *sattva-śuddhi*, *q.v.*

sattva-śuddhi—purity of nature or disposition ; purity of the body.

sāttvika — pertaining to or characterised by the *sattva-guṇa*.

sāttvikī dhṛiti—the *sāttvika* type of mental resolution.

śaucha—purity.

śaurya—valour, heroism.

shaṭka—a group of six ; particularly, one of the three groups of six chapters each into which the *Gītā* is usually divided.

siddha—an inspired sage or saint.

siddhi—attainment of an end ; acquisition of occult powers.

śloka—a stanza ; esp. a stanza composed in *anushṭub* metre.

smṛiti—remembrance; memory, the internal mental impression which forms the basis of memory ; a class of Hindu sacred writings dealing with their social, moral and political laws, so called because they are held to have been reproduced from remembered revelation by the ancient sages of India.

soma—a creeping plant much used in ancient *Vedic* sacrifices and frequently alluded to in *Vedic* litrature as well as in the Persian *Avesta*.

So' *yaṁ Devadattaḥ*—"He is that Devadatta", the standard form of the statement of recognition in Sanskrit.

Śraddhā-mayo purushaḥ—Man is made up of his faith.

Śrībhāshya—the well-known commentary on the *Vedānta-Sūtras* by Rāmānuja, the great South Indian reformer and philosopher.

sṛishṭi—creation; manifestation.

śruti—what is heard; Revelation; the revealed scriptures.

sthairyaṁ—firmness, stability, fixedness.

sthita-prajña—the man of firm mind and established wisdom.

sthiti — standing, staying: maintenance; continuance.

stoma—an ancient Persian ceremony in honour of an angel or an ancestor.

Śūdra—the labouring class in the ancient Hindu organisation of society.

sukha—pleasure, happiness.

sukṛita — good deed: the impressed tendency due to good deeds.

sukṛita-karma—work which is good in itself.

sūkta—literally, that which is well-spoken; a *Vedic* hymn.

sūtras — aphorisms: concise statements of the principles of any subject.

suvirūḍha—well-grown.

svādhyāya—repeating to one's self; study: study of the *Vedas*.

svāhā—an exclamation used in offering oblations to the gods.

Svarga—the celestial world of the gods, the heaven of Indra and the other *Vedic* gods.

svarūpajñāna — knowledge which is essential nature.

svarūpānanda—bliss which is essential nature.

svastha—self-abiding; established in one's self.

Tamas—that 'quality' of matter which makes it dull, immovable and inert.

tāmasa (-ī) - pertaining to or characterised by the *tamo-guṇa*.

tamasaḥ paraṁ—beyond darkness: the limit of darkness.

tamo-guṇa—the 'quality' of *tamas*.

tamo-dvāra—doorway to hell.

tanmātras—the subtle bases of the five *bhūtas* or elements of matter.

tapas—the heat felt in consequence of self-restraint and internal effort: the practice of religious austerities.

tataḥ then, afterwards.

tattva—'that-ness', truth; a first principle.

Tat tvaṁ asi - That thou art.

tejas—brilliance; spirit, energy; one of the five external elements.

trikaraṇas—the three instruments of work owned by the soul, viz., mind, language and body.

tṛishṇā—thirst, desire.

tṛishṇā-saṅga — covetousness and selfish attachment.

trivarga—literally, a group of three; particularly, of the four objects of human pursuit, *dharma, artha, kāma* and *moksha*, the first three collectively.

tyāga—renunciation; abandoning, giving up.

tyāgin—one who practises *tyāga*.

Udāna—one of the five 'vital airs': it is responsible for respiratory activity.

udgātṛi—a chanter; the priest who chants hymns of the *Sāma-Veda*.

ūhana—reasoning; inference.

ukāra—the sound *U*.

upādhi—that which more closely defines, a distinguishing attribute; limitation.

upadrashṭri—one who oversees, a supervisor.

Upanishads—a class of *Vedic* works which contain the fundamental thoughts and teachings of the ancient sages of India as bearing on Hindu religion, philosophy and metaphysics.

upāya—a means, an expedient.

upeya—that which is to be sought, the goal.

Uttama Purusha—the Best or Highest Person; the Supreme Spirit; God.

Vāch—the goddess of speech.

vairāgya – freedom from desire; dispassionate non-attachment; dispassionate disinterestedness.

Vaiśeshika—a system of philosophy attributed to Kaṇāda and noted for its doctrine of '*viśesha*' or 'particularity'.

vaiśvānara—fire: Agni, the god of fire; the fire of digestion.

Vaiśya—the third caste in the typical Hindu organisation of society; a member of the trading class; the common freeman of the ancient Aryan community.

vāk—speech.

vāṅ-maya-tapas—the *tapas* of speech.

varṇa—colour, race, caste.

vāsanā—impressed tendencies.

vāyus—the 'vital airs' responsible for life and its functions.

Veda—the main scripture of the Hindus consisting of hymns in praise of gods, sacrificial formulas, prayers, etc.

Vedānta—the concluding part of the *Veda*; the *Upanishads*: the system of philosophy taught in the *Upanishads* as expounded by Bādarāyaṇa in the *Vedānta-sūtras*.

Vedānta-kṛit—the maker of the *Vedānta*.

Vedānta-sūtras—literally, aphorisms on the *Vedānta*; particularly, the name of a work by Bādarāyaṇa which attempts to expound the teachings of the *Upanishads* systematically in short aphorisms—the work on which all the great *āchāryas* have taken their stand.

Vedāntin—a follower of the *Vedānta* philosophy.

Veda-vit one who knows the *Vedas*.

vibhūti—a special manifestation of God.

vidhi-dṛishṭa — prescribed or approved by rule; what is 'seen' (laid down) in the *śāstras*.

vijñāna—understanding, intelligence, wisdom; science, knowledge of any kind.

vikāra—modification: change in configuration.

vikshepa — mental distraction caused by desire and aversion.

vinivṛitta-kāma—one free from desires.

viniyoga—use, application.

vishāda—despondency

vishaya—an object of sense, pleasure of the senses, worldly object or aim.

viśvarūpa—universal form; the universal form of God.

vrata—observance, practice: a voluntary act; a vow.

vṛiddhi—increase.

vṛitti-jñāna—the knowledge of the empirical self.

vṛitti-sukha—the bliss of the empirical self.

vyabhichāriṇī—swerving, straying, inconstant.

Vyādha-gītā—a section of the *Vanaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* which contains the teachings of the Dharmavyādha.

vyāna—one of the five 'vital airs': it carries on circulatory activity.

vyavahāra—practical affairs, transactions.

Yajña—an act of worship, a sacrifice.

yajña-śishṭa—what is left from a sacrifice or oblation.

Yajur-veda—one of the four *Vedas*, that which deals especially with the duties of the sacrificial priests called *adhvaryus*.

yantra—any means or instrument, machine: a mechanical contrivance.

yāta-yāmaṁ—that which has stood for a night, stale.

yoga—practical application; concentration of the mind; the practice of mental concentration; the system of Hindu philosophy expounded by Patañjali: practice or practical application of a rule of conduct established by speculative or theoretical reasoning: a reasoned exposition: the acquisition of such good things and advantages as have not yet been obtained.

yogin—one who has practised *yoga* and attained self-realisation in the state of *samādhi*.

yukta-svapnāvabodha — one who has proper (hours of) sleep and wakefulness.

TABLE OF TRANSLITERATION FOR SANSKRIT.

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ
a	*ā*	*i*	*ī*	*u*	*ū*
ऋ	ॠ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ
ṛi	*ṛī*	*e*	*ai*	*o*	*au*
		अं	अः		
		ṁ	*ḥ*		

क	ख	ग	घ	ङ
k	*kh*	*g*	*gh*	*ṅ*
च	छ	ज	झ	ञ
ch	*chh*	*j*	*jh*	*ñ*
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण
ṭ	*ṭh*	*ḍ*	*ḍh*	*ṇ*
त	थ	द	ध	न
t	*th*	*d*	*dh*	*n*
प	फ	ब	भ	म
p	*ph*	*b*	*bh*	*m*
य	र	ल	व	श
y	*r*	*l*	*v*	*ś*
	ष	स	ह	
	sh	*s*	*h*	

ERRATA

Page	*Line*	*For*	*Read*
50	29	given to risen to	given risen to
59	30	You, know	You know
60	23	It may said	It may be said
73	13	teachings Śrī Kṛishṇa	teachings of Śrī Kṛishṇa
80	13	It may asked	It may be asked
89	16	*guṇatīta*	*guṇātīta*
89	24	*prākāśa*	*prakāśā*
101	10	priliminary	preliminary
101	33	succintly	succinctly
163	32	predition	perdition
182	29	It may asked	It may be asked
186	2	n addition	In addition
188	13	drawns	dawns
213	34	straighforwardness	straightforwardness
229	3	impiled	implied
230	39	vaiue	value
239	20	*Cm tat*	*Oṁ tat*
316	39	pywer	power
350	8	tructible	structible
357	40	reffection	reflection.